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SELIMA,
OR THE
VILLAGE TALE,
A
NOVEL,
IN A
SERIES OF LETTERS,
BY THE AUTHORESS OF
FANNY.
IN SIX VOLUMES.

VOL. V.

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AND
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LETTER CXLV.

FROM THE SAME

TO

TO THE SAME.

O! Selima! did you not refer me to my first interview with Montgomery, for a true delineation of your feelings, in a moment which was to confirm the tenderest wishes of your heart, in the reciprocal attachment of a worthy man? It is already past: I have suffered a rencontre with Montgomery, and nothing could have added to the anguish of the moment, but the remotest probability, that it presented any circumstances typical of your present feelings; but that is

an aggravation from which kind Providence most graciously exempts me.

Yes, I have again beheld the man, for whom, through his falsely imputed merit, the weak partiality of my heart, had received but too much sanction from my mistaken judgment—I beheld him, Selima—but it was in the apartment of my father's wife—thither I had taken the child in conformity with my promise, to receive the caresses of its supposed repentant mother ; and indeed she seemed to bestow them on him with a tenderness unaffectedly maternal ; but as I was about to remove my little charge, whom she did not seem particularly anxious to detain, the door was thrown open, and Mr. Montgomery was announced.

I know not which of us was most astonished and confused : I recollect only that he made an attempt to speak to me, but under such circumstances, it is scarcely necessary to inform you, that I
waited

waited not for the purport of his address, but instantly left the room, with the indignation of my heart, I hope, perfectly evident in my eyes, and returned home to ruminate on the most afflicting incident of my whole life. Is it not inconceivable, how this unfortunate passion imperceptibly took an indelible impression on my mind?—indelible, I fear, I but too prophetically term it; for though perfectly convinced of the despicable principles of its object, I am nevertheless unable to erase his idea from my thoughts. I have had, however, the resolution to return two letters unopened, which, notwithstanding the flagrant proof of the depravity of his heart, he has had the insolence to address to me, one in his own, and another in a disguised hand. The deception did not take effect, and I am fortunately in no danger of being duped by his artifice, as I have been by my own folly.

My

My father has already remarked, with the most kind attention, the ravages of this unutterable grief upon my health and spirits; unutterable most particularly to him.—but alas! the increased indisposition of my little brother, whom I seldom leave to the care of a servant, presents but too feasible a foundation for the sudden alteration in my appearance.

Dear Selima, I fear by this continued reservation of your promised letter, Mrs. Leslie's return is again retarded. If I am right in the conjecture, neglect not any longer, I entreat you, to write to her a circumstantial account of your situation; peculiarly kind, considerate, and liberal, as are her sentiments, I cannot but tremble for the consequences of so *inexcusable* a want of confidence. Pardon the word, and honestly confess, that it does not deserve a better. May Heaven perfect the scene of prosperity which opens to your view, and inspire with a
meek

meek and humble resignation to a contrary fate, the afflicted heart of your sincere friend,

JULIA WESTBURNE.

LETTER CXLVI.

THE HON. VALTIMOND MONTGOMERY
TO
CAPTAIN TALBOT.

THOUGH I am selfish enough to lament, I cannot be surprized at your unusual silence, whilst the supreme felicity of mutual love supports its opposition against the no less just, but less despotic claims of steady friendship. But I will not growl at the consequences of an engagement, which I would give worlds to emulate;—no Talbot—instead of envying your better fortune, from it alone in future must I hope to derive a ray of light to mitigate the gloom of mine.

Miss

Miss Westburne is in Paris; I have seen her, and my misery is complete—though fully sensible, that I never possessed any exalted station in her esteem, yet till this fatal accident, I did not endure the consciousness, that fool or villain was written in striking characters on my brow.

That infernal harpy, Lady Alicia Westburne, was surely born for the destruction of my peace. By some cursed chance she was made acquainted with my arrival here as soon as it happened, found out my lodgings, and pestered me with so many lamentable petitions, that like an egregious blockhead, I at last visited her with the sole intention of offering her what pecuniary assistance would be necessary for her future maintenance, provided I should find her willing solemnly to abjure the disgraceful course of life, to which, by a native depravity, I fear she has been reduced. This is true upon my honour: for al-

though she once inspired me with a kind of admiration, which I mistook for love, her subsequent conduct has rendered her the object of my insuperable disgust: and pity, which I could not withhold from the most loathsome reptile in distress, is the only tender sentiment she can ever more create in my breast. But how am I to eradicate the false impression of my principles, which the angelic mistress of my heart must have received from a rencontre with me in the apartment of a woman of her character, though led thither, I am proud to observe by the same impulses of humanity, by which she herself was actuated.—I have written twice, but my letters have been returned unopened—what am I to do? Instruct me Talbot.—You are a successful adventurer in the art of love, and nothing is wanting to the completion of your felicity, but the generous delight of extending it to the bosom of a friend;—you see I am making you a
 very

very courtier-like "petition, by offering a bribe to your own interest.

Alas! my dear Harry, out of your abundant liberality—pity, the last poor cold consolation of the wretched in this instance, is the only portion you can bestow; and on that inexhaustible fund, notwithstanding my own large demands, I shall venture to levy contribution for an unfortunate fellow-traveller, Sir Charles Smith Stanley, whom before his change of name and acquisition of a title and large estate, you have heard me mention as a young physician, for whom I entertained a particular friendship when at college; and you may judge of the pleasure, with which our intimacy was unexpectedly renewed upon the Alps; but, poor fellow, an unfortunate attachment has so entirely subdued his natural vivacity, that I cannot help contemplating the metamorphosis with a concern which adds poignancy to the sufferings of a no less rigorous fate—yet his disappointment

having been precursive, and in one respect necessary to your present happiness, it is not likely to excite the sensation of sympathy in your mind. In a word, had poor Stanley's passion been returned, you would never have known the blessing of being the accepted lover of Miss Selima Worthy, though perhaps you might have been equally content in the Pagan worship of some inferior deity, whilst a brighter heaven had never been revealed to your understanding.

To this discovery was attached another, which will occasion you infinite surprize, without effecting any alteration in your sentiments with regard to the disposal of your hand and fortune.

Be it known to you then, that the fair object of your idolatry is no other than the foundling adopted by your late aunt, so much the subject of your mother's unaccountable dread and implacable aversion, and the innocent cause of the most irreconcilable dissensions in your family.

family. Though no predestinarian, I cannot help thinking, the hand of fate must have been most sedulously employed in counteracting the wise precautions of your relations, and creating a violent passion in your breast for a woman, whom you have been taught from infancy to consider it a part of your duty to detest; and whom I dare say you never heard mentioned but by some such contemptuous term, as the creature or the beggar's brat: a circumstance, to which may be attributed that ignorance of her former situation, which has facilitated the removal of this early and deeply-rooted prejudice; which, as I conclude from my long acquaintance with your character, will never more recover its dominion over your mind. Yet I will presume to remark, though it is with fear and trembling, that Miss Worthy's reserve in a point, in which you are so essentially concerned, brings forward a trait in her character, but little accordant with the

the candour, openness, and liberality of sentiment, by which it has been hitherto represented: and, swear as you will, I must admonish you to be upon your guard against the possible artifice of a mercenary mind. Though formed above your sex to captivate the heart of woman, independent of the alluring appendages of rank and fortune, yet “when love receives such countenance from prudence, nice minds may be suspicious of its birth.”

I even recollect your mentioning the circumstance of the girl, by whom your aunt had been *infatuated*, having luckily dropped the mask, and run away with the footman, the postillion, or some dirty fellow suitable to herself.

This story might be true, or it might be false; but in your situation, I think, it calls for a minute investigation. I have had a warm argument with Sir Charles upon the subject: he swears that a mean idea never inhabited the breast
of

of your adorable—yours he even suffers me to style her in his presence, generously wishing for a speedy confirmation of the term, whilst his own passion exists with unabated fervour : and from this noble sentiment does the wish proceed. You are the object of her affections, and he prefers her happiness to his own. Here is an example of true love—Put the case in the opposite point of view, and answer me, couldst thou “go and do likewise?” No, Talbot, it is not your way ; and yet your ways are “ways of pleasantness”—and may they lead you to the “paths of peace !”

I have never answered your inquiries concerning the conduct of your mother, from a motive which your penetration would spare me the pain of disclosing, were it not become absolutely necessary to apprise you of the miserable state to which her foibles have reduced her. A friend of mine, who is her near neighbour, informs me that she is surrounded
by

by such a nest of vipers, that her life hangs upon a very slender thread, if they can derive any advantage from its dissolution; that she is kept in a continual state of intoxication, and no person of credit suffered to approach her. Under such circumstances, how ill soever you may brook the unseasonable interruption of more blissful avocations, you must admit that your attendance is indispensable, where duty makes so urgent a claim, a claim unanswerable also by any other expedient. This is a business in which it is impossible to act by proxy, or you would not have occasion to solicit the zealous services of a friend.

Matters here, if *a lover can forget himself to a politician*, begin to resume a more serene aspect.

The King is safe in his prison, and the National Assembly once more employed in endeavouring to establish the consequence of their paper currency.

If

If a letter from you has not yet commenced its journey, delay not to answer the just demands of this, unless you would have me imbibe a most invincible hatred for your divine mistress, whom, amongst the worldly goods with which you are impatient to endow her, I earnestly wish to take no very scanty portion of the esteem and veneration of your sincere and affectionate friend,

VALTIMOND MONTGOMERY.

LETTER

LETTER CXLVII.

MISS WESTBURNE

TO

SELIMA.

INVOLVED as I am in a variety of real distresses, I little want the addition of the imaginary evils with which your unusual silence distracts my mind.

When I wrote last, I thought myself unhappy ; alas ! the measure of my woes was then but incomplete : since that period, I have lost the dear companion, in whose innocent caresses I hoped to find their only solace, and from it I believe I may date the commencement of his disorder, which in a few days discovered itself to be the small-pox, of a kind so inveterate,

inveterate, as from the first, to exclude the remotest probability of his recovery.

Though liable myself to the infection of this malignant disease, even in spite of my father's remonstrances, I never left the side of the dying infant, and am now rewarded with the soothing consolation that he never felt the loss of maternal care; and if a similar fate is to withdraw me from a world which I have little reason to regret, I shall die in the blessed consciousness of having performed my duty: but I must not trifle with the present moment, the only space of time on which the healthiest can depend, having a circumstance to relate which much concerns your interest, and therefore not a matter of indifference to me:

A young English woman, with an appearance uncommonly prepossessing, happening to offer herself to supply the place of Bouvais; my situation at the time making such an attendant peculiarly necessary, I ventured to engage her with-

out making any minute enquiries into her character; nor has her behaviour hitherto given me any cause to repent of my precipitation.

As my last letter to you lay upon the table by my side, my new servant accidentally casting her eyes on the direction, with great amazement exclaimed, "Miss Worthy! Pray madam excuse the liberty I take, and permit me to ask, whether Selima is not the Christian name of the lady to whom this letter is addressed?"

In return to my answer she said, "Then madam I have a sufficient apology to offer for the seeming impertinence of my curiosity."

"What!" cried I, half breathless with astonishment, and from this extraordinary prelude expecting nothing less than the entire removal of the mystery by which your birth is overclouded, "Do you know any thing of Miss Selima Worthy?"

"Madam,"

“ Madam,” replied the girl, “ I have heard her name so often execrated, and am so well acquainted with the wicked schemes which have been practised by her most cruel enemies against her reputation, and I may say her life itself, by depriving her of the only source of her subsistence, that now discovering her to be a friend of yours, my heart reproaches me for having so long connived at, by neglecting to expose, the villainy of which I was but too thoroughly apprized.

She then informed me, that she lived with Mrs. Gowarth, the worthless sister of Mrs. Anne Aubrey, at the time of your banishment from her protecting roof; that that event was accomplished at the instigations of her avaricious mistress, and that the agents to whom the execution of her iniquitous design was intrusted, were a woman (Mrs. Woodley) who, being an illegitimate child of her uncle’s, had been brought up as a dependant in the family, and a nephew

of hers by the mother's side, not less allied to her in artifice than blood. She likewise added, that the tenderness of your benefactress was never entirely subdued; and that, notwithstanding the false ideas which had been instilled into her mind, she had never been prevailed upon to alter the will executed in your favour, and had once actually made an effort to recal you, which would even have eluded the vigilance of her invidious companion, had not the peculiar delicacy of your own sentiments unfortunately operated against you, in inducing you to return a letter unopened, under the supposition that it was written contrary to the positive injunctions of your revered friend; when it was in reality dictated, sealed, and sent by her own hand to the post, before the arch fiend, to whom it is now evident you owe all the distresses of your life, had an opportunity to counteract the design.

From

From Peggy's information I likewise gleaned, that the thousand pounds remitted to you by Mrs. Woodley was but a moiety of the sum entrusted to her care for your use ; and that the whole was no more than the value of some fine jewels, which were deposited with your nurse.

All this is very strange, and yet so intermingled with well-authenticated facts, that there is no room for incredulity.

I am greatly fearful, that this young woman could not be initiated into such a scene of complicated infamy, without —. But I can write no more ; my head aches, and the pen trembles in my hand.

Farewel. A tear, in spite of my efforts to restrain it, would drop upon the word. Do not suffer my melancholy to interrupt your bliss, but write, I conjure you by the tender affection you have long professed for me, that I may receive

one token more of its existence before
—I do not know what I would say—be-
fore that important change takes place,
which is to secure to you a better friend
than your

JULIA WESTBURNE.

LETTER

LETTER CXLVIII.

THE HON. VALTIMOND MONTGOMERY

TO

CAPTAIN TALBOT.

DEAR Talbot, this suspension of your correspondence, which appeared at first but as the natural result of the intoxicating draught of happiness, of which you have been so enviably quaffing, now fills my mind with the most alarming conjectures, at a period when my affliction has little need of aggravation, a period when the angelic soul of Julia Westburne is momentarily expected to quit its earthly mansion. Do I live to write the sentence? It is impossible to say what the human mind is capable of sustaining

sustaining. Ten days have I dragged on a miserable existence, under continual apprehension of an event far more dreadful than any thing my reason is able to describe.

The small-pox caught in her benevolent attendance on the wretched offspring of a worthless mother, is the distemper which now preys with its utmost malignity on the delicate frame of the most amiable of her sex. In the midst of my distress, I must own that I have received no little consolation during the two last days, from the knowledge that she wants not the best medical assistance, which even her own country can produce. Sir Charles Stanley, who is a man of unquestionable abilities, authorized by Mr. Westburne's anxious enquiries for an English Physician, made a tender of his services, which were with much gratitude immediately accepted; and heaven be praised, he did not find his patient reduced to that extremity of danger,
in

in which her situation had been described ; though her fever was tremendously high, and attended with a delirium, in which, can it be possible ! I know not whether the discovery at this instant serves too soothe, or add poignancy to the conflicting emotions, which rend my heart—In her delirium she frequently repeats the erroneously-supposed hateful name of Montgomery. She loves me, Henry—Gracious powers! she loves me, but it is with a passion, which now may be more fatal to my hopes than scorn itself : for mingled unfortunately as it is with a strong idea of my unworthiness, it takes a part with the disorder, and increases the distraction of her mind. These are trials, which make me feel the most excruciating pangs of silent woe ; but meeting with a nature fiery as yours they would tear your reason from its seat, and soon render you insensible of the “ flings and arrows” of inevitable fate : a state comparatively
blessed,

bleſſed, and yet a ſtate from which, merciful Heaven, defend my friend !

Forgive this croaking ſtyle, ſo little concordant with the happy reverſe of your ſituation at this juncture : but your felicity is too far exalted above the peſtilential vapours of my deſpondency, to fear the dangers of contagion.

Mr. Weſtburne, by his frequent attendance in the chamber of his ſuffering daughter, is become acquainted with the partiality of her heart, and condemns himſelf with the ſevereſt acrimony, as an acceſſory in the deſtruction of his only child, through his blind indulgence of the caprice of an infamous woman. That ſhe frequently mentions the name of Lady Alicia in conjunction with mine, he fortunately miſconceives to be the natural reſult of her former oppoſition to our union ; at which time, I am ſtill perſuaded, the lovely Julia was herſelf unconſcious of the latent flame, which

which even then must have been secretly
enkindled in her breast.

The doctor is just returned with an
aspect so gloomy, and a silence so per-
severing, as almost to disable me from
subscribing myself, your ever sincere
and devoted friend,

VALTIMOND MONTGOMERY.

LETTER

LETTER CXLIX.

MRS. LESLIE

TO

MISS WESTBURNE.

Dear Madam,

THE painful task devolves on me to account to you for Miss Worthy's extraordinary inattention to a friend, who will ever preserve a most distinguished place in her affections.

Ingratitude and insincerity can never be inhabitants of her heart. It is to the acuteness of her feelings, opposed by the immoveable rectitude of her principles, that she owes the interruption of a scene replete with present joy, and the earnest

earnest of a futurity of bliss. You were not acquainted with the mutual attachment, which commenced during my absence, and was most unfortunately concealed from me—dear creature!—her reserve in this instance, though in fact only the offspring of sensibility, was a deviation from her character, which has inflicted on her a punishment infinitely more than adequate to so venial an offence. On my arrival in Bath, which as she informed me happened on the day following that on which her last letter to you was dated, I surprized my lovely ward engaged in a *tete-a-tete* with a young man, in whose form and face was displayed a most perfect model of manly elegance. One of the delicate white hands of his fair companion rested unreluctantly in his, whilst on the other hung a black velvet ribbon, to which a trinket was suspended. At my approach, the natural bloom of her complexion, thoroughly reinstated by the

return of happiness she has of late experienced, diffused itself in a deeper tinge over her cheek; but her eyes at the instant beamed with rapture, which she wished not to disguise, and in the honest effusions of her joy, throwing herself into my arms, she exclaimed,

“How delighted am I, after so long an absence, again to embrace my parent, my preserver!—happy, happy girl!” turning to the gentleman with an air of tenderness, “to be thus surrounded by my guardian angels!—O! my dear madam, I have much to tell you; in the first place, behold the fatal locket, in part the cause of a long series of distress. But the thief is caught at last, and what must we make him suffer for the offence? Nothing less than banishment, I think”—

“Or bondage,” added the gentleman, “can be a sufficient punishment for his crime.”

“Pardon

"Pardon me," said Selima; "I am so intoxicated with happiness, that I almost forgot that Captain Talbot has not the honour of being known to the revered benefactress of"—[she hesitated]

"Of the adored mistress of his heart," cried the captain, concluding the sentence for her. He would then have addressed himself to me, in whose mind, notwithstanding my surprize at a reception so unexpected, the name of Talbot had created a degree of anxious curiosity; and I could not forbear asking him immediately, if he was not the nephew of our departed friend?

"Excuse the interruption my good Sir," said I, "and permit me to ask, if I have not the pleasure of conversing with the son of Captain Talbot, brother to the present Earl Fitzalwine, who married Miss Louisa Gowarth, one of the coheiresses of Sir Lionel Aubrey, of W——?"

My poor Selima's countenance changed at the enquiry, and when it was answered in the affirmative, a death-like paleness overspread her lately animated face. I soon perceived the sudden metamorphosis with the anguish of feeling myself its cause. Her lover, no less alive to every emotion of his mistress, was equally aware of the effect, without ascribing it to any other source than some sudden indisposition, and in consequence of this idea, called upon me with frantic urgency, to send for immediate advice; but Selima opposed an intention in which I did not coincide, too well knowing that her disorder was not of a nature for medicine to remove.

“No,” said she, faintly, “do not aggravate my pain, my complaint comes not within the reach of physic; make yourself easy, my dear Talbot”—observing the distress of her amiable lover, “there only wants your illness to render mine utterly insupportable: yet do not
be

be terrified, though my sufferings are acute, they will not kill me. Leave me for the present, I entreat you ; when I am better I will send to you ; upon my honour I will—and in the interim may heaven shield you from a participation of the agony I endure!—Farewel.”

The last word was uttered with a look so expressive of internal wretchedness, that my heart bled ; and I bitterly condemned myself for having inadvertently precipitated a discovery, which a few minutes must have produced ; indeed my ward has since assured me, that the name of her deceased friend was about to pass her lips at the very moment of my entrance.

Not long after this heart-rending separation, and I had with difficulty supported the dear trembler to her own apartment, we were joined there by Mrs. Poyntz, who was not at home at the time of my arrival.

“ Mercy on me ! ” exclaimed she, “ what is the matter ? Mrs. Leslie, excuse

this strange reception. Talbot tells me, that Selima is extremely ill, and he is himself in the most pitiable state of distraction.—My sweet girl, how were you affected? have you sent for a physician?"

Miss Worthy shook her head, and a sigh forced a passage from her oppressed bosom; but she could not speak.

"Alas!" said I, "to what purpose? it comes not within the practice of physic, I fear, to eradicate the maladies of the mind."

"Your words only serve to encrease my perplexity," returned Mrs. Poyntz; "surely you cannot have the cruelty to oppose an union"—

"No madam," said I, "it is in the happiness of my child only that I look for the existence of mine, and to promote it, I would sacrifice my life itself. Would that there were no other obstacles to the wishes of her heart, than the opposition they will ever meet from me!

Were

Were it not for the peculiar refinement of her own principles"—

"And pray," interrupted she, "If I may take the liberty to ask, by what extraordinary circumstance have these fine feelings been brought into action at so mal-opportune a juncture?"

In a few words I made her acquainted with the true state of the affair, at which she made a contemptuous pish! and cried--

"Pshaw! these are ever the blessed effects of fine feelings: but I trust, when you have entertained yourself with acting your romance a day or two, you will find out the absurdity of suffering the pride of an old woman, who is dead and gone, to interfere with the happiness of the living. Well, well, I will go and comfort poor Talbot, who, though you have reduced him almost to the necessity of a strait waistcoat, is by much the most rational creature of the three."

"Do,"

“Do, dear madam,” entreated Selima, feebly, but with great earnestness, “for believe me, in assuaging his grief you will be administering most effectually to the consolation of mine; but at the same time I conjure you not to divulge to him the true cause of my indisposition. No, no, as it is my hard doom to plunge a dagger in the breast I love, be it my care to temper it with all the tenderness of an affection which no vicissitudes of fortune can ever shake.”

I, who have been long acquainted with the susceptibility of her nature, clearly saw, that if ever the tumultuous passion obtained an influence over her heart, that she must be either a blessed or a melancholy instance of the extremity of its power. Yet my dear madam (superstition you know is one of the attributes of age) such a fatality has seemed to govern every incident relative to this extraordinary engagement, that I still hope a beneficent Providence would

would not have encouraged it in the beginning with so many flattering auspices, had it not graciously designed to favour it in the end ; but this is a vague idea, arising from the ardent wishes, which, as it were, naturally agitate the bosom of a mother for the welfare of her child.

When I ventured to take up the axiom of Mrs. Poyntz, who, though an amiable woman, for whom I entertain what I think I may presume to call a reciprocal regard, is not endued with that keen sensibility, which corrodes, whilst it dignifies, the mind of a Selima Worthy ; when I would have enforced her maxims, all the answer I have received, has been another question to this effect, gently retorted upon me ;

“ Were the dear parent of my helpless infancy, to whom I owe every blessing I have ever known, without excepting even the possession of your love, existing now—would she have presented

to

to her nephew the only hope of an illustrious family, the indigent hand of an obscure foundling, the child of charity? Speak sincerely the sentiments of your deceased friend, for by them in this instance will I be most invariably governed. As for your own, my dear madam, they are too much under the influence of your partiality for an unhappy girl to yield me that assistance, on which, in the present exigence, I dare rely."

What could I say Miss Westburne? Alas! I knew but too well the disposition of my greatly esteemed, but much deluded, friend. Pride was the reigning foible of her mind. To this weakness fundamentally may be attributed all the sorrows of her adopted child; for, to preserve her nephew from the force of her seducing charms, she relinquished the pleasure of his company, and would have sacrificed the innocent, and at the same time beloved, object of her apprehensions,

hensions, by an union, against which her reason no less than her heart recoiled.

Exhorted thus earnestly to sincerity, I was determined, at all events, to be sincere; and to this end, I not only confessed to her my own opinion with respect to Mrs. Aubrey's views for the aggrandizement of her family, but shewed her several letters, in which this now truly interesting subject had been particularly discussed. She received the confirmation of the presentiments of her own breast, without any visible emotion. Indeed, her grief has, from the first, been of that calm and silent nature, that from the total absence of her natural gaiety only, it is possible to judge of its excess. She who was wont to be the life and spirit of the company wherever she appeared, now sits by my side the melancholy statue of her former self, not in our comfortable abode in the Circus at Bath, in the neighbourhood of Mr. and Mrs. Poyntz and their agreeable family,

family, but in an obscure street in Westminster, as you see by the date hereof, to which we took our departure on the morning following that memorable day, marked with the disclosure of the fatal secret, which proved, I believe, in some degree, an affliction common to us all.

Steadfastly determined, as Selima was, never more to expose herself to an interview with the man to whom her heart was irreversibly attached, and from whom her rigid obedience to the will of her deceased benefactress must eternally separate her, our sudden removal became indispensable.

The short and melancholy interval was employed in penning an everlasting farewell to her distracted lover, endeavouring, but in vain, alas! to mitigate the pang which she thought herself compelled by the laws of duty to inflict. But the shock was too much for his high spirit to sustain: his reason soon yielded to
its

its force. I have just received a letter from Mrs. Poyntz, in which she says, poor Talbot is in a raging fever, and supposed by his physicians, to be at the point of death. I received this calamitous account in the presence of my ward ; yet, though I shuddered through every nerve as I perused it, the fear of communicating the alarm happily endued me with the fortitude to conceal my feelings, and when she cast her languid eyes upon my face with an enquiring look, and tremulously said,

“ From Bath, Mrs. Leslie ? ”

With astonishing composure I answered in the affirmative ; and when she ventured farther to ask if all were well, I calmly replied that Mrs. Poyntz herself was somewhat indisposed with a slight cold, but that all the rest of the family were in good health.

“ Thank you, my dear madam,” said the amiable creature, though evidently labouring under a severe disappointment :

pointment : “ you see my weakness, and have too much real tenderness for me to indulge it. I flattered myself, indeed, that I might be informed whether—but you know best :” And with a deep sigh she turned towards a frame, with which she has industriously occupied herself, with the hope of diverting the gloomy tendency of her thoughts : but the tears, which for the first time since the late blight of all her flattering prospects came to her relief, fell upon her work ; and, covering her face with her handkerchief, she hastily left the room. I did not follow her ; for I had no comfort to impart : her situation is truly pitiable ; and in the midst of her own unspeakable distresses, she is not indulged with the consolation of contemplating its reverse in the happiness of her dearest friend. Yours of the 20th ult. was forwarded to her here, and has filled her mind with the most terrible apprehensions. Selima has tried ineffectually to
 answer

answer it, and has at length been obliged to resign to me a task from which, in all her former troubles, she had never failed to extract a salutary balm. She has suffered me to take a copy of her letter to Captain Talbot for your perusal, which I shall inclose without making any comments on the contents. I only fear its own language will be too affecting for the present state of your spirits : yet there is a soothing pleasure even in weeping over any testimony of the magnanimity and greatness of soul of a beloved friend. Let those who build their fame on the merit of their ancestors regard with envy the innate superiority of this deserted foundling, and be compelled to acknowledge, that

“ 'Tis in the mind all genuine greatness lies.”

Not that Miss Worthy is the descendant of vulgar parents. The jewels deposited for her maintenance, with the letters which accompanied them, forbid

the supposition ; and the latter, with the most plausible sophistry, attest the innocence of their writer. But, alas ! self-praise is a very slender recommendation. I wish there were half as strong a presumptive evidence of the virtue, as there is of the wealth, of her progenitors.

The intelligence of your servant only substantiates my suspicions. I was well acquainted with the little inheritance of our amiable orphan, and knew also that it lay in the hands of a steward, who not improbably might make each talent ten, but was utterly incapable of diminishing them. Under these well-established sentiments, how was it possible to account for one moiety only of what I had frequently been informed was the worth of the diamonds being remitted to their owner under the form of a donation, without a deep though secret distrust of the agent employed in the transaction. It was I indeed, who first induced my friend to keep her beloved
child

child in ignorance of her little store, to avoid creating in her mind expectations, the fallacy of which might prove the source of a discontent not easily to be erased, till arrived at an age to receive the information without injury ; and you will believe that this advice was given without the smallest forethought of this gross abuse of my well-meant precaution.

Notwithstanding my little personal acquaintance with Captain Talbot, my heart feels so many motives to bleed for his unhappy state, that to wear an appearance of composure, in the presence of his fellow-sufferer, is a task I am now almost unable to perform ; nor know I how to act under an exigence so peculiarly fraught with present and impending woe. Were I to reveal to Selima the secret of her lover's illness, the dear girl, already drooping like a blooming flower rudely severed from its parent stalk, what could it avail, unless it were

to produce a similar catastrophe on her part?—No, I will wait for further information from Mrs. Poyntz, with all the fortitude with which my nature is endued; and if the sufferings of this amiable young man should be so far alleviated as to permit relenting heroism to speak comfort to his oppressed spirits, moral rectitude, in such a case, independent of the emotions of the heart, must render all further persuasions unnecessary. No maxim of duty can actuate Miss Worthy to sacrifice the life of the nephew, through a mistaken obedience to the will of his deceased aunt. My earnest prayer is, therefore, that his delirium may subside, and afford an opportunity to soothe his distressed mind with a restoration of its former hopes. Alas! should this dear child be doomed at last to be the murderer of the protector of her innocence, at a moment too when he is endeared to her by the tenderest ties of reciprocal affection, her
 life

life or her reason only could atone for a rash action, into which a Quixotic virtue has misled her judgment.

Now, dear Miss Westburne, notwithstanding the bulk to which this melancholy packet is already extended, permit me to thank you for the honour you confer on me in requesting my advice for your conduct in an affair, wherein your own heart has already so amiably dictated. To combat the impulses of benevolence and in its room to inculcate the sentiments of distrust and narrow circumspection in a young mind, would be to anticipate the pernicious consequences too often experienced from a long intercourse with the world; therefore, without scrutinizing too minutely the intentions of your step-mother, whilst she continues to live decently, do not suffer her to lack the means of pursuing the same line of conduct, at the same time strictly adhering to the judicious design you have expressed to Miss Worthy
of

of taking no measures, by which a reunion with your father may possibly be promoted; neither would I counsel you to take any part in opposition to such an event, should chance engage itself in its accomplishment: for which I shall only give this simple reason, that it is not the duty of a child to direct the actions of a parent. I will further venture to admonish you not to engage yourself in any promise whatsoever, but suffer your bounty to be proportioned to the necessities of the present time, I say necessities; for a profuse liberality can never be meritorious, but when exercised in the service of the virtuous. In the next place I shall take the liberty to offer myself for your banker and agent in the affair, being well qualified for the office by my connexions abroad.

Have the goodness soon to let us hear of your health and restored happiness. Not to descend to personal professions, which

which come of course at the conclusion of a letter, I will merely remind you of a truth, of which you will entertain no doubt, that in beguiling of one pang from the wounded bosom of your gentle friend, you cannot fail to administer a most certain comfort to that of your most obedient humble servant,

CAROLINE LESLIE.

LETTER

LETTER CL.

SELIMA

TO

CAPTAIN TALBOT.

" Fate gives the wound, and man is born to bear."

DEAR Talbot, let it not excite your anger, but your compassion, that poor Selima is made the wretched instrument of its wrath. Yet if anger may fill up the place of a momentary pain, suppress it not: I would sooner incur your resentment than be the cause of your distress. No, may that affection, which it has been the pride of my soul to have inspired, be converted into the most frigid indifference, and even hatred itself,
if

if its existence is incompatible with your peace. Ah! why have I lived to write, or give thought to an injunction so adverse to the fascinating visions of felicity, which have misled my brain! Yes, and in the utmost sincerity of heart have I written it; a heart which never felt itself engaged by a more indissoluble attachment, than in the cruel moment wherein it is separated from the object of its regard.

It is the will of my untoward destiny, that we *must part for ever*; nay, that we are already parted, never to behold each other more. Ere you receive this, I shall have left Bath, in search of an asylum, from the transporting happiness of mutual love, in the dark recesses of deep regret and unfathomable despair, where you must never come. No, my Henry, it shall be my incessant prayer, that you may be preserved from sharing the malignity of my fate. Accuse me not of caprice, but if you feel
yourself

yourself wounded by this unexpected blow, consider that its first fury has been exhausted on a weaker victim; yet rather than cherish a hopeless passion, think me more variable than the wind, suppose me capable of every ignoble sentiment diametrically opposite to those which dignify your mind, and have irrevocably established its sovereignty over mine.

For myself, though its chastisement is harsh, it is my part to submit with meek humility to its force. It was an unpardonable crime I fear, to aspire to an union, of which I knew myself to be unworthy; but being neither sordid nor ambitious, I thought less of the inequality of our situations with respect to rank and fortune, than of the superior merits which adorn your mind and person. There, I confess, I have been guilty of an indefensible presumption, into which wealth and titles never could have betrayed me. During this transient dream
of

of never-to-be-realized felicity, little did I imagine I was about to return all my obligations to the friend to whose maternal care I owe more than my existence, by casting a disgrace upon her family—a disgrace of which, as I lately have discovered, an extraordinary presentiment was impressed on her mind, and proved the original cause of all those melancholy incidents I was beginning to relate to you when the fatal accident was revealed which chance had reserved to afflict the commiserating heart of Mrs. Leslie, in whom still lives the counterpart of the most amiable qualities which distinguished the universally-revered character of your deceased aunt.

So circumstanced, under a prohibition enforced by the sacred laws of more than filial duty, can you dispassionately wish to espouse the woman who, in receiving your hand, must indubitably forfeit your esteem? At this moment,

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when

when the flame, which has been unfortunately enkindled in your breast, is perhaps strengthened by the first gust of opposition, I fear you would, in obstinate defiance of your better judgment, return an answer in the affirmative; but it is by the will of a superior power that we are divided, and it is not our business to argue, but to conform. Time and reason have wrought wonderful metamorphoses on the human mind, and will, I trust, evince their dominion in reconciling us to a fate by which we possibly may have escaped from misfortunes, which, through our whole lives, we should have been condemned to deplore:—You from that of having degraded a noble house, by introducing into it a girl of an obscure, and not improbably of a meretricious, origin, and of finding yourself entirely alienated from the esteem of your family. I from sacrificing the welfare and honour of the man I love, without affecting my own happiness

happiness, which never could be promoted at so heavy an expence.

It breaks my heart to suffer a syllable, which bears the smallest semblance to reproach, to fall from my pen in this last sad instrument of communication which will ever pass between us: but I cannot take leave of you for ever without just intimating, that, unless I misunderstood you, you once told me, or at least insinuated, that neither of your parents were yet alive. Ah! wherefore would you deceive me? by prolonging our fancied security, it has served to encrease the anguish of the present hour. A deviation from truth is seldom attended with impunity. But I was no less culpable in failing to place as usual an unlimited confidence in the bosom of my absent friend. Indeed, were we always impartially to review the misfortunes which oppress us, we should generally discover their basis to be some error of our own.

I can no more—Farewel, dear Talbot, farewel, for ever !—May a gracious Providence protect and guard you, and provide for you a fate more proportionable to your high deserts, than that which would have united you to the wretched

SELIMA WORTHY.

LETTER

LETTER CLI.

 FRANCIS SUTHERLAND, ESQ.

TO

 THE HON. VALTIMOND MONTGOMERY.

Sir,

THOUGH personally a stranger to you, and unauthorized by Captain Talbot, I venture to take the liberty to acquaint you with the melancholy cause of your three last letters to our common friend being unanswered, well knowing the great regard that has long subsisted between you. But in truth my own mind has been so ingrossed with anxiety and apprehension on his account, that though I have a wife and family at a distance, I have scarcely been left a thought out
of

of his apartment, to which he has been confined during the last fortnight with a violent fever and raging delirium, which till last Thursday admitted not the smallest prospect of his recovery. Since when we have entertained hopes, that his youth and excellent constitution will struggle successfully with the dreadful consequences of disappointed love on a temper ardent and inflammable as his : his illness being entirely occasioned by what I am half inclined to term the false delicacy of his mistress, who refused to fulfil her engagements on discovering her lover to be the nephew of her benefactress. Yet I must acknowledge that so great a sacrifice is an irrefragable testimony of her worth, and, whatever may be her origin, undoubtedly denotes the true nobility of her mind.

Yet the dangerous consequences of this desirable disentanglement, being, I trust, subsiding, I imagine you will coincide in the general wish of his friends,
that

that an engagement so inimical to his own consequence, and the reasonable views of his family, may never be renewed.

The young lady, immediately on forming the meritorious resolution of sacrificing her passion to the principles of duty, and her exalted ideas of gratitude, which rendered a perfect submission to the will of her benefactress indispensable, fortunately left Bath, concealing from her lover the place of her retirement, or her fortitude could never have withstood the force of the dreadful malady to which her honourable conduct had reduced him. Mrs. Poyntz, a lady with whom she had been some time a visitor, has been extremely sedulous in her enquiries; and, indeed, I was weak enough once earnestly to wish for the presence of her young friend, though the state of insensibility to which Talbot was at that moment reduced, must

must have rendered her tenderness ineffectual. During the whole of his delirium she was not many minutes absent from his imagination; nor do I think her actual appearance could have made a deeper impression on his distracted mind. Since the turn of his disorder I have carefully represented the situation of our patient to be so truly convalescent as to form no inducement for a change in the noble sentiments of his amiable mistress; which I well know would cost me a friend whose esteem I hold invaluable, were poor Talbot to be acquainted with the deceit; a most palpable deceit, Heaven knows; for the poor fellow has merely got over the violence of his distemper to fall into a state no less pitiable; though not equally alarming.

“Does Miss Worthy know that I am dying a martyr to her cruelty?” demanded he, deeply sighing, with a ghastly look which seemed to plead for consolation; which had I had authority to

to administer at that moment, I could not have withheld. My answer was dictated by truth, which only enabled me to say, I did not know. Much dissatisfied with my reply, he sighed again, as it seemed, with aggravated anguish, and, dropping his languid head upon the pillow, said, "Give me a composing draught, for I am very faint.—Were its properties perfectly oblivious I should swallow it with delight."

In perusing your letters, for which he eagerly inquired on the return of his recollection, when his eye fell on an unlucky insinuation of duplicity against Miss Worthy, of which her late conduct has proved her so peculiarly undeserving, he tore the paper, execrated the writer, and renounced all future correspondence or connexion with you. His agitation was such, that I expected from it little less than a repetition of all the terrors we have undergone. But this gust of passion, now operating on an enfeebled

enfeebled frame, produced a very different effect, and, instead of a return of fever, was succeeded by faintings, which appeared to me to threaten a speedy dissolution. Indeed my hopes would not yet be very sanguine were they not encouraged by the opinion of his physician, who is a man of sense and candour, and scruples not to declare, that he entertains little doubt of his patient's recovery. This respectable son of Esculapius was recommended by Lord Fitzalwine, whose paternal tenderness towards his nephew, whom (notwithstanding the recent fracas which had happened between them) he visited as soon as he was apprized of his danger, will, I trust, in the end, be rewarded by the accomplishment of his most ardent wish. Poor man! I feel most sensibly for the anxiety which he is unable to disguise; whilst our infatuated friend, lost to every consideration but what relates to the imprudent attachment which

still

still keeps an undiminished influence over his heart, is incessantly talking of the undeniable charms of the fair obstacle to his views, whose name, I perceive, is grating to his ear.

Talbot is too high-spirited to be capable of deceit, or rather too noble to entertain a sentiment it would cost him a blush to acknowledge. As for his passion for Miss Worthy, his partiality represents her as so infinitely superior to himself in every intrinsic merit, that it is the dearest gratification of his pride to converse on the (as he terms it) indissoluble attachment of his heart.

My situation is particularly distressing. Should the life of this amiable young man fall a victim to a mistaken zeal for its future aggrandizement, mine would never know contentment more. Yet persuaded as I am, by people of better judgment than myself, that my fears are groundless, it would be the most flagrant absurdity to counteract the wisest purposes

purposes by yielding to a foolish timidity, for which I must be universally condemned.

It is my Lord Fitzalwin's wish, that our friend should quit England, as soon as his strength shall be sufficiently recruited to fit him for the undertaking. The rescue of his mother from the fiends that surround her, and the miserable state to which her own infamous conduct has reduced her, seems to take considerable hold on his attention, notwithstanding the absolute dominion which a female of an opposite character retains over his mind. Though all filial affection must have been long eradicated from his breast, by principles which could excite no sentiments but those of horror and detestation, yet Talbot has never neglected the duty of a son, and I pray to Heaven that in this instance he may consider it as the first of all human obligations; but alas! time has much to do in our behalf, before any plan can be put in execution,

execution, tending to divert his oppressed spirits. At present he seldom speaks; but when he is forced to the exertion by questions, which he seems to think importunate and cruel.

“ Let me die in peace,” is his continual prayer, “ for mercy’s sake interrupt not my contemplation of all that I can yet know of Heaven.”

Permit me to offer you my earnest entreaties to write without delay. I think a letter from you, notwithstanding the resentment excited by your last, would prove more consolatory than our utmost assiduities. Though I now write secretly from the fear of a prohibition, you are welcome to make what use you think proper of the melancholy information, which I thought it necessary to communicate to you. In the mean time I have the honour to remain, Sir, your most obedient, humble servant,

FRANCIS SUTHERLAND.

LETTER CLII.

MISS WESTBURNE

TO

SELIMA.

MY sweet suffering Selima, to describe to you my feelings for your afflictions, or to thank you for your kind commiseration of mine, at a time when any other mind would have been utterly engrossed by its internal griefs, I must learn some new language more expressive than my own. And yet excuse me when I say, that this last scrupulous refinement, teeming with calamity and unpromising of any good, does not obtain from me that approbation and reverence which I have ever found the involuntary

voluntary tributes of the magnanimity of your soul, and the worthiness of your actions. In thus submitting to the principal, perhaps the only, foible of your deceased friend the government of your conduct, are you not eternizing the baneful consequences of caprice, which I think you have sufficiently suffered henceforward most carefully to avoid? but I cannot argue; this is the first time I have been permitted to exercise my pen, and, I fear, these crooked lines, which my trembling hand is yet only capable of forming, will give you a false idea of my returning health. My disorder, which has left so many indelible marks behind that I fear you will scarcely recognize the altered features of your disfigured friend, was the small-pox; and I know not whether to tell you, or leave you to guess, to whose humane care and medical knowledge I owe my almost miraculous escape from its malignity. Yet, on the reflexion that your

feelings are not in a state to permit any body to trifle with them but yourself, I will not irritate your curiosity, but at once acknowledge, that the amiable, but unfortunate, Doctor Smith, now dignified with a title, and ycleped Sir Charles Smith Stanley, bart. (in consequence of my poor father's anxious enquiries for an English physician) has constantly visited me with the tenderest assiduity.

Surely, Selima, you could not have been insensible to such extraordinary merit in so fair a form, had not some unseen cause reserved your heart for the possession of one, not more worthy in mind or engaging in manners, I will venture to pronounce, but more the favourite of fortune than himself.

Though my head grows very light with looking on the paper, I cannot conclude without undeceiving you with regard to the character of Montgomery : he is not the wretch which I erroneously represented

represented him in my last ; and which I have endured the misery to suppose. His visit to Lady Alicia, in which chance had maliciously ordained our rencontre, was the only one she received from him, and was made merely in compliance with the most abject entreaties. That infamous woman has again found a paramour, and the cloak of innocence, which effectually answered her purpose as long as it was necessary, is once more thrown aside, and will never be reassumed, believe me, with any success upon my credulity. The mistress of the house where she lodged, finding herself somewhat out of pocket by her abrupt departure, brought to me all the treasure she had left behind, which, though it consisted of nothing to her worth carrying away, or to her hostess's worth keeping, contained the to me invaluable certificate of Montgomery's truth. O ! how soothing is the sensation of being capable of esteeming those, whom we are com-

pelled to love !—Montgomery is lost to me—for ever lost—lost by my own folly ; before this terrible distemper had deprived me of the power to excite any sentiment, but disgust. You cannot conceive any thing so horrible as my appearance ; but I am forbidden all subjects, that tend to the depression of my spirits.

Make my apology to Mrs. Leslie ; that for a little time I must delay my thanks for her manifold kindness : the last, but not the least, of which I shall always remember with the most lively gratitude, though the occasion for its exertion has for ever ceased.

I would either send you Mr. Montgomery's letter to lady Alicia, in which is a full demonstration of the goodness of his heart, or a faithful copy of its contents, but I am too fond of the original to lose even the transient possession of it, and too much fatigued to transcribe it at present.

In

In the midst of my anxieties, I enjoy a most sensible pleasure in perceiving, that my father has lost all his own maladies in the contemplation of mine—a blessed effect, which I pray to Heaven may not subside, when the cause exists no longer.

I trust that in your next I shall perceive, that the good counsel of your friends, and the dictates of your own heart, have successfully combated a romantic enthusiasm, unworthy and destructive of that virtue, which is its foundation; and that your happiness will once more cheer the gloomy path of your less—fortunate friend,

JULIA WESTBURNE.

LETTER

LETTER CLIII.

THE HON. VALTIMOND MONTGOMERY

TO

CAPTAIN TALBOT.

AFTER having passed a long season of the most uncomfortable suspense, and been racked with a succession of vague conjectures, a letter from your friend, Mr. Sutherland, far more confirmed all my apprehensions by acquainting me with a disappointment, of which I had not the smallest foresight; or all that has ensued, my knowledge of your character would have represented to my imagination, as a thing of course. Yes, Talbot, I know your disposition; but was ignorant of the exalted soul, by which

which the actions of your fair mistress have been regulated. Most sincerely do I pity you, my dear fellow. To conquer an affection which has for some time been cherished by the most smiling delusions of hope, when every circumstance conspires to confirm esteem, is a labour which Hercules would have found himself unable to perform: and I do not expect that you will undertake the task, nor can I ever wish it. I am a lover myself, and in the most excruciating tortures of the disease, have never wished to change, for insensibility, the subtle pain. In my opinion, when wealth and titles are weighed against a sincere affection for an amiable object, in every other respect perfectly unexceptionable, they become light as æther, and the scale strikes the beam. Besides, Miss Worthy must be honourably descended, or let the pride of blood for ever be exterminated, if all its boasted advantages have been derived from any
other

other source. You must not—no—surely fate cannot—design to separate such congenial minds.

Tell me, Harry, does your Selima possess no vestige, by which she might possibly dissolve the cruel mystery, which obscures her birth? Believe me, though I am this moment under the misfortune of having incurred your just resentment, I would travel over seas or deserts to serve you, or promote your union with the fair idol of your adoration. Any woman with a heart at liberty would willingly devote it to you; but she alone, who could relinquish you to perform her duty, is perfectly deserving of you—nay she receives the due reward of her magnanimity.

In consideration of your sufferings from this tyrannic passion, I will not minutely mark its evolutions in my breast: suffice it to say, therefore, that Julia is better, and that with her returning health, my hopes revive.

I have

I have not yet been permitted to approach her ; but her good father has engaged to procure for me an interview, as soon as her recovery is so far advanced, as to permit her to receive visitors ; and I know not whether hope or fear predominates in my mind, when I look forward to an event, which promises to form the crisis of my fate.

Write a few lines if you can without injury to yourself immediately, to relieve me from a doubt of your forgiveness, which, I am sure, you would not have the inhumanity to withhold, were you sensible of the contrition of the offender ; yet I must confess, my views are not confined to a bit of paper, honoured with the signature of her hand ; they even extend to the pleasure of seeing you on this side of the water, ere many weeks have elapsed from the present time. The wretched situation of your mother loudly claims your attention ; and when your recovered strength
wil,

will permit you to undertake so long a journey, I am persuaded it will not be found a secondary consideration in your mind.

I shall write to Mr. Sutherland, to whom I esteem myself much obliged, by this post. He seems to be attached to your interest by the warmest friendship, which I trust will induce him to accompany you on your tour: but if any domestic ties should deprive you of his services, and you will accept of mine, be assured *ils sont tout à vous*. I will meet you at Calais, or where you please; and travel with you as far as your health or happiness requires; notwithstanding the attractions which attach me to Paris.

Talbot will never fail to find a faithful and devoted friend in the person of

VALTIMOND MONTGOMERY.

LETTER

LETTER CLIV.

SELIMA

TO

MISS WESTBURNE.

I have at length taken up my pen, but am so ill qualified for the use of it, that I know not what to say. Julia, the cruel hand of adversity has again seized me, and I am no longer able to struggle with its grasp : but to pour forth fruitless lamentations into your ear against a fate, to which I must, nay to which I am steadfastly determined to submit, would be a weakness unworthy of myself, injurious to you, and the basest ingratitude to that Providence who has graciously preserved me from the lowest depth

of human wretchedness, which even my low boding imagination has the power to fathom. Talbot has been at the point of death!—I, who had so lately escaped the horrors of being his supposed murderer, have been upon the brink of falling into the dread reality; but he lives! lives! his honour uncontaminated; and the sacred ties of gratitude and duty, which bind me to the memory of his departed aunt—unviolated and unshaken. Happily I knew not of his danger during its existence, or where would have been my fortitude? but heaven is all-sufficient, and supports the conduct it approves. Do not, my beloved sister, through a mistaken tenderness, exert your sophistry, to deprive me of my only comfort, the only stay, on which my reason rests, the consciousness of having acted right.

But wherefore should I distress you with a theme so melancholy, when the evil is not to be removed by discussion? It
is

is my duty to strive to invigorate my shattered spirits. Where would be the little merit I am so vain as to hope to appropriate to myself, were I in the end to sink supinely under the trial of my integrity? but alas! my Julia, were I to turn my eyes from my own distresses, does your letter present me with a much less dreary prospect? you are even more desponding than myself; yet your situation (I speak it with joy and thankfulness of heart) is enviable, when viewed comparatively with mine. Your sorrows may soon be succeeded by the possession of all your wishes; whilst those of the wretched Selima can only terminate in the grave.

Let not the loss of beauty afflict you. If Montgomery's affections were only to be held on so perishable a tenure, they were not worth the keeping.

You cannot imagine how much I was delighted at the critical introduction of the humane and skilful Doctor Smith to

your acquaintance, whose merits you so highly appreciate, that were it possible for me to conceive any degree of mutability in the attachments of the heart, I should breathe a fervent prayer, that this truly worthy knight might succeed to the felicity of being the accepted lover of my angelic friend. My gratitude and esteem have long been his; and at a period, when I beheld in him the preserver of my better self, is it likely those sentiments should be extinguished in my breast? No, Julia, I am ready to join with you in yielding them every eulogium, excepting only that wherein—"praise undeserved" *being* "fatire in disguise." You depreciate rather than ennoble the character you admire. But you know not Talbot, and I forgive you the comparifon. You must be sensible of a weakness, which I blush not to acknowledge. My hand trembles at the name, and my poor heart suffers almost a continual agitation. Surely there is no impiety

piety in saying, may Heaven accelerate its eternal rest! Forgive me, dearest Julia, for enervating your spirits by betraying the imbecility of mine. I find it impossible to assume the appearance of ease, which I am destined never more to feel. I now live but to give pain to every body that I love. Who would wish for existence at so hard a rate?

As I find I can write only to afflict you, excuse me for shortening the ungrateful task, and remaining silently your wretched, but affectionate friend,

SELIMA WORTHY.

P. S. Mrs. Leslie has received your promised letter, from which we have both derived no little consolation in observing some degree of returning cheerfulness in the style.

LETTER CLV.

CAPTAIN TALBOT

TO

THE HON. VALTIMOND MONTGOMERY.

MOUNTAINS may be removed, we are informed, and, without doubt, a smaller quantity of clay, once animated in the form of man, may be conveyed from pole to pole. Therefore, it is not impossible, with the consent of my executors, but I yet may visit you in a foreign clime. But, alas! my friend, I shall never shake hands with you again. Were you to behold the emaciated figure of the once "bold-faced villain" ycleped Harry Talbot, you would not talk to him of travels, tours, and peregrinations

tions—No, my dear fellow, my route is fixed ; I am on the eve of setting out for that “ undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveller returns : ”—Would I were better freighted for the voyage !

My kind, officious friends tell me, that I recover strength perceptibly ; but my inward weakness is a monitor which flatters not, whilst it speaks a language more soothing to my broken heart.—Think you I can wish to live deprived of every thing I hold valuable upon earth ?

I find I can write to you without fatigue, though I cannot talk to the good people who are about me. There is less exertion of spirits requisite for the employment ; besides I know that you will pity me, and they have hearts of adamant untempered by the gentle influence of love. They urge me to converse ; yet they will not indulge me with the subject which alone occupies my mind.

But

But be it so ; “ thoughts are free,” and to them I willingly resign myself for the short space which yet remains between me and eternity. Yet tell me, Valtimond, if I live to hear from you again, your undisguised sentiments of Miss Worthy’s conduct :—But do not blame her, or I shall execrate you again :—No, though I am dying a martyr to her cruelty, I cannot suffer my dearest friend to say that she is cruel. All I ask is, whether you think, if she loved me with the ardour and sincerity which my passion for her deserved, that she would have sacrificed my peace to an enthusiastic attention to an old woman, who left her an outcast on the world ?—O ! no. My own feelings pronounce it to be impossible. It is an agonizing thought, and serves to complete the wreck of my sinking fortitude.

My frame is so totally enervated, that I can no longer guide my pen. God preserve you, and unite you to the woman

man that you love. I meant to talk to you of my mother, but it is too late, I can only pray for her. Even the dear image, which will float upon the surface to the last, must soon be lost even to the mental view of your yet affectionate

HENRY TALBOT.

LETTER

LETTER CLVI.

MISS WESTBURNE

TO

SELIMA.

O Selima! were you restored to that prosperity which your caprice has forfeited, your friend would be the happiest of women. Montgomery has seen the metamorphosed Julia, and is so far from being disgusted with her appearance that his visit is to be repeated tomorrow. There is no possibility of describing to you my distress when, with that of Sir Charles Stanley, who frequently honours us with his company, a name so interesting to my ears, was unexpectedly announced. I obeyed the impulse

impulse of the moment, and, covering my face with my hands, made an effort to escape, and had almost reached the stair-case when my flight was tenderly intercepted by the object of my dread.

“ Dear madam,” said he, “ is the sight of me baneful to your eyes, that you hide your face, and endeavour to avoid me with this cruel precipitation?”

“ No indeed,” said I, hesitating as he led me back to the parlour, where my father sat laughing at my embarrassment, for it seems my delirium has discovered to him all the secrets of my heart—“ But I—I, pray forgive my rudeness; it is myself—my own figure—you see how unfit”——again trying to conceal my altered countenance, which the number of lights rendered more conspicuous than it was before. The tears gushed from my eyes—yes the poor baby absolutely wept for her complexion. I had now sufficient cause to be ashamed, I felt the full force of my own absurdity,

ity, and what rendered it still more mortifying, was the consciousness that Montgomery ascribed my folly to its proper cause; but it seemed to increase his regard, and I cannot at this moment remember it with regret.

It was a concerted plan between my father, the baronet, and his bosom friend, to take me thus inhumanly by surprise; but when it was to surprise me into happiness, as the two former confidently assert, and I have not the power to contradict, no violent offence I think can reasonably be laid to their charge. Would that my felicity could excite the spirit of emulation in your breast, and provoke you to be happy! Your sophistry, though very persuasive, does not convince me that you are right—yet I love you too well to know, that you are in affliction, and withhold my compassion, from whatever source it may have arisen; though to the noble-minded youth, who has suffered the unmerited disappointment

disappointment of his hopes from your ungenerous hand, I know the sentiment alone belongs.

There was an air of despondency diffused over the latter part of your letter, which made me tremble as I read it.— You will not surely suffer your enthusiasm to undermine your constitution, and plunge yourself into the commission of a crime of the most atrocious nature to avoid the trivial, if not altogether imaginary, error of deviating from the dictates of prejudice and pride. I wonder Mrs. Leslie does not exert her influence over your mind :—but your fascinating powers have charmed the current of her thoughts, and taught it only to take its course from yours.

Adieu, my sweet incorrigible girl— may you not repent, when it is too late, an implacability of spirit, which has destroyed your own happiness, and much disturbs the peace of your sincerest

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(90)

friends ; among whom, I have not the
humility to rank in the lowest class your
affectionate

JULIA WESTBURNE.

LETTER

LETTER CLVII.

THE HON. VALTIMOND MONTGOMERY
TO
CAPTAIN TALBOT.

IN the moment, when fortune seemed disposed to gratify the most sanguine wishes of my heart—in the moment when Julia Westburne had escaped the dangers of the most malignant malady; lived, and not only lived, but lived to bless me with her charms, your letter arrived, and renewed the gloom from which my senses had so late emerged.---
“Never see me! never shake hands with me again,” my dear fellow! I shudder as I repeat your words---but I trust your spirits are more affected than your
K 2 strength,

strength, and that your youth and constitution will be able to support you against the keen sensibility of your mind. Were it not for this hope, instead of being seated at my writing-desk, I should even now have made some progress in my return to England: but I yet flatter myself, that I shall be permitted to meet you on the Gallic shore independent of your executors. Change of scene would contribute to your recovery no less than change of air, and I have a temptation to offer you, which I think it is not in your nature to resist. Be it known to you then, that the most confidential friendship has existed between our fair mistresses, from the earliest infancy; and by mine, I am informed, that your mother is the inveterate enemy, to whose infernal machinations (excuse the expression) the gentle Selima owes all the poverty and distresses of her past life; and that if any vestiges remain, which may by any means lead to a discovery

covery

covery of her origin, they are undoubtedly in her possession. For the latter part of this account, we are indebted to a young woman, who lived with Mrs. Gowarth at the time of her last husband's decease, and witnessed the full exercise of her iniquity. She is now in the service of Miss Westburne, seems to be a good girl, and happy in being transplanted to a more congenial soil.

Only consider the possible consequences of this discovery, if attended to in time; and I fear not but you will struggle effectually with your disease. Every nerve will be reanimated, when called to exert itself in such a cause. You cannot die, and suffer Miss Worthy to live a victim to the avarice of your family.---You ask my sentiments of her conduct---have I not already declared them in the most unequivocal terms?

I am, notwithstanding, most willing to repeat, that it marks a greatness of soul, which proves her birth to have

been noble, if the prevalence of blood is any thing more than an idle chimera. In short, to say of her at once as much as can be said of woman ; it is my firm opinion, that she was designed by fate for the partner of my friend.—Frustrate not its wise intentions by sinking under a momentary trial, meant perhaps but to render your felicity complete.

Miss Westburne pities you, and even ventures to blame her inexorable friend. But do not *execrate* her on that account ; for she is a most winning advocate, and very zealous in your behalf. Make haste to give me an opportunity of introducing you to this angelic woman, before the hand of sickness has withdrawn its lineaments from your brow : for there is something so formidable to the female heart in the figure of that “ Gay, bold-faced villain,” which I hope ere long to behold again in the person of Harry Talbot, that I should tremble for the consequences of an interview in its undiminished

diminished lustre, notwithstanding the prior engagements of both parties : nor would you, at this period, meet upon unequal terms ; for the late transparent skin of my lovely Julia has not yet entirely recovered the ravages of the terrible disorder from which she has otherwise happily escaped: nor is this, as the doctor informs me, more than a transient evil, which the air will in a short time entirely remove. I will not deny that I receive some pleasure from the assurance, though I protest, that had this dear object of my unalterable affection been metamorphosed into the very opposite of her beauteous self, as far as personal perfections only were concerned, my passion would have been unabated : nay, I am even ready to worship the redness remaining on her complexion, for having called forth an involuntary testimony of her partiality, which I shall ever remember with delight. On my first visit, authorized by her father, but totally unexpected

unexpected on her part, she covered her face with her hands, and was unable to conceal the utmost agitation of mind, on being obliged to expose it to my view, under the disadvantages of its present appearance ; but I soon experienced the happiness of reconciling her to herself, by my attention, and she now receives me with an unaverted eye.

It is inhuman thus to talk to you of happiness, which, believe me, I cannot perfectly enjoy, whilst it continues to be estranged from the bosom of my friend.

My family will soon be made partakers of my happiness : my father was before acquainted with the situation of my heart, and will rejoice in this kind turn of fortune in my favour.

Write by the return of the packet. My dear Talbot, there is no describing the anxiety I am condemned to suffer, till your health is re-established.

Your last letter was the first production of your pen, which I have committed

mitted to the flames ; but the language of it unnerved me, and I found to destroy, and in a great measure to discredit, its melancholy evidence, was the only means, with the least degree of tranquillity, to subscribe myself your sincere and affectionate friend,

VALTIMOND MONTGOMERY.

LETTER

LETTER CLVIII.

CAPTAIN TALBOT

TO

THE HON. VALTIMOND MONTGOMERY.

MY faith in the efficacy of a broken heart, to produce its own enfranchisement, is now utterly dissolved. I am yet alive, and likely to remain so; and, strange and unaccountable as it appears, I can no longer withhold my belief of a fact too clearly exemplified, which is, that I recover bodily strength gradually, in spite of the anguish, which does, and ever will, corrode my mind. Indeed Montgomery, I know not any circumstance in this world which could add to its poignancy, but the idea of outliving
a passion

a passion, which forms the pride and glory, as well as the torture, of my heart. O! my dear fellow, with what soothing visions do you beguile my shattered spirits! I see, but must yield, to the delusion. The flatterer Hope will now and then graciously intercept the gloomy prospect of the most wretched.

Before the arrival of your letter, my mind was occupied with the intention of answering that, whose fatal contents bereft me almost of life, and entirely of what is infinitely more valuable, those blessings which made it worth retaining; but I was unequal to the task, nor knew I the present retirement of the adored, but rigid, judge, by whose hard sentence I stand condemned for others crimes. I shall now give up the idea, till my visit to France has been accomplished; from which I know not what to hope, but have little left to fear. Yes, my friend, I am travelling towards you morning, noon, and night, as fast as a brisk gale
of

of inclination will carry me, whilst poor ability is at too low an ebb to second its operations. Yesterday, to make a trial of my returning strength, I was taken to the South Parade, in a sedan chair, and resting on a stick on one side, and my friend Sutherland's arm on the other, I found great difficulty in making a second tour of the walk ; yet would I have undertaken a trip to the continent to-day, if I had been my own master ; so easy is it to re-animate the hopes of a lover. I am all curiosity and impatience to discover any means of exalting myself in the estimation of the mistress of my heart ; but I am like your Grand Monarch, too weak at present to contend for my share in the rights of men, and am taught by experience, even under the excellent arrangement of the British constitution, that it may sometimes be essentially necessary to our personal welfare, to submit to the laws of subordination.

During

During my short perambulation yesterday, I met Lord Hazleford, reduced to the same tottering condition as myself. The doctors say his case is a hopeless one, and that he will soon fall a martyr to an intemperance, indulged to the most extravagant excess. He touched his hat as we passed, and I would have returned the compliment, for on my own account I feel no enmity towards him, but the dear idea, which is much nearer to me than any selfish consideration, restrained my arm, curdled "The milk of human kindness in my breast," and conjured up the phantom of defiance in my face. The effort must have been truly ridiculous to the spectators, and I was fool enough to amuse myself for some minutes after my return home, in puffing out my fallen cheeks, and trying to look fierce. You would have been diverted with the attempt, had you seen me at the moment, for I verily believe, a moderately valiant grasshopper

would venture to encounter my foot, were he able to look up into my face. But I intend to recruit my forces with all possible diligence, and from henceforth to submit implicitly to the discipline I have despised. You have almost reconciled me to life: at least I would not die till I have searched the secreted treasure of my ——. O! Valtimond, is it not a cruel reflection, that I have never through life been able to pronounce the tender and venerated name of mother, without shrinking at the sound?

My father left me, you know, under the guardianship of Lord Fitzalwine, by whose affectionate attention I have been secured from feeling the loss of paternal care. • He brought me up as his son, and as his son I ever respected and obeyed him, except in the single circumstance of realizing the tie. Yet his enmity to my mother, in whose favour Nature pleaded strongly in my breast,

was

was a continual source of affliction; and whenever he injudiciously suffered a sarcasm against her reputation to escape his lips before me, I felt a resentment, which I was scarcely able to restrain, though I had not the effrontery to express it as a boy. But I flattered myself, that time would afford me an opportunity of vindicating her honour—when alas! time has only proved to me, that a woman's honour is irretrievably lost, when it stands in need of vindication; and instead of daring to assert her innocence, I am even condemned to blush when necessity obliges me to mention her name. It was this filial misfortune that betrayed me into an appearance of duplicity in the eyes of Miss Worthy, who being incapable of deceit herself, must despise the man, who, in any exigence, could descend so low as to avail himself of a contemptible subterfuge. But when she asked me if I had a parent, though I could not deny,

yet I had not the courage to acknowledge, the existence of one, whose vices had rendered her a disgrace to her family. In my last visit to her at Aix la Chapelle, before the death of Mr. Gowarth, I saw too clearly into her character, ever more on her account to rail at the censoriousness of the world.

But this is an unpleasing topic, and only a recapitulation of what we knew too well before : but scribbling to you is the only means I have of giving relief to my oppressed mind ; for the name of my divine Selima seems repugnant both to the ears of my uncle and Francis Sutherland. They are in a confederacy ; I see into their motives, and take all possible care to prove to the former the fallacy of his views. I love him too well to encourage his expectations ; perfectly sensible as I am that they never can be fulfilled. For, *entre nous*, were it possible that my whole acquaintance with Miss Worthy could be obliterated from

from my recollection, the charms of my fair kinswomen are not exactly to my taste; and though there is but one woman in the world whom I could love or marry, there are numbers whom I should prefer infinitely to them.

My spirits are as variable as the wind, which is now in its most capricious mood: one moment following the bent of your suppositions, my imagination decks the beauteous Selima in all the hereditary honours apparently coincident to so elevated a mind; the next plunges me again into despair. I behold her still ignorant of her birth, still obdurately resisting the ardent supplications of persevering love: nay, so prone are my gloomy thoughts to the creation of horrible images, that a few nights ago, as I thought I was standing at the altar, the priest, on the point of presenting me that hand, to receive which I would freely barter every other earthly good, a shrill voice, whose shrieking

accents seem still to grate upon my ear, forbade me to marry the daughter of my mother. Agitated by the frightful vision, I started in an agony from my pillow, and it was with some difficulty that I was preserved from falling into convulsions in consequence of the shock, from which, however, my awakened reason soon enabled me to recover, and to return thanks to Heaven that it only proceeded from a dream.

You may see by the description I have given you of my situation, that I cannot penetrate so deeply into the designs of futurity, as to fix the time of our meeting; but a little April sun, which is renovating to all nature, will not, I trust, exclude me from its benign influence; and before many of its mild and genial rays have been expended for the general good, I hope to have recovered life enough to transport me to another shore, without the help of my executors.

Farewell,

Farewell, recommend me to your adorable, with some share of the prevailing eloquence you have used in your own behalf, for in *one* sentence you have made me a partner in your idolatry; and not without the fear of your jealousy before my eyes, I shall venture to prove syllogistically, that I love her twice already, and when I have been introduced to her, have no doubt but I shall love her three times as well as you do. In the first place, I love her for your sake, you know—(it is rather too civil though to grant you precedence, when two ladies are in the question) in the second, I love her for the sake of that angelic friend, for whom only I regard my life; and in the last, as must naturally ensue from an acquaintance with such distinguished merit, I shall love her undoubtedly for her own—*ergo*, my affection for her must be three times as great as yours, who

“ Love

“ Love her for herself alone.”

Farewell once more : the patience of my friend Sutherland, who is silently sitting by my side, will be quite exhausted, though, as he is no company for a *Philander* himself, it is natural to suppose, that he can derive little pleasure from the conversation of a fighting mortal, reduced to a state for which he is incapable of feeling the smallest commiseration. I know him to be a good fellow, am fully sensible of his friendship and my obligations, and yet I frequently wish him at the devil. You differ widely with him in your sentiments of love and matrimony. He married an heiress, who, in addition to her wealth, happening to possess some portion of beauty, and a large one of good nature, they contrive to live comfortably together or asunder, as chance thinks proper to dispose of them—enviable state ! peaceful medium ! to which nature

ture has left our irritable spirits untempered. The lot of Valtimond or Henry must be blessedness or misery: must—nay it is irrevocably settled in the book of fate. The former, dressed in all its fairest ornaments, awaits your acceptance. The latter, black as Erebus, obtrudes itself on mine. Forgive me—the string—the nerve of my insanity is touched, and in nothing but my friendship am I capable of subscribing myself your *steady* friend,

HENRY TALBOT.

LETTER

LETTER CLIX.

SELIMA

TO

MISS WESTBURNE.

YOU are happy Julia, and I rejoice, most fervently rejoice—yes my depressed soul for once seems to emerge from the drear abyss, in which my destiny has plunged it, to contemplate the felicity of my friend. I must ever sympathise in the feelings of your heart; however you may condemn the sentiments of mine. Your pity, you tell me, should be engrossed by the lord of my affections—No, the only reward of all my sufferings, is, that I have preserved him from the pity of the world, that I have sacrificed

crificed every earthly comfort for the security of his honour—Heaven forgive me for having once endangered it by the indulgence of a presumptuous passion, which, though pure and disinterested, must have worn a very different appearance itself, and have tarnished the character of its amiable object.

It is not our sentiments, but our situations only, I am persuaded, that are different in this point. It is not possible for you one moment even in imagination to divest yourself of birth, of fortune, and of friends, and exchange them all for the condition of an indigent foundling. How can you take upon yourself the feelings of one, who, instead of having wealth and honours to bestow, can only extend an empty, nay a desolating, hand to wrest them from the man she loves?

Poor Talbot, at this moment, sighs under the recency of his disappointment, yet I doubt not but that time will prove to him the necessity of the deed, and
that

that I shall see myself, though no longer the object of his passionate regard, in secure possession of his gratitude and esteem, and the real preserver of his peace. In this hope I live—be it once accomplished, and—but I will write no more. Wherefore should I write to give you pain? Yet it is all one whether I write or speak; it is but to afflict one or other of my dearest friends. Mrs. Leslie is more compassionate than you are, and bears a heavier part in the sorrows of your

SELIMA WORTHY.

LETTER

LETTER CLX.

MISS WESTBURNE

TO

SELIMA.

YOU are such an adept in making the "worfe appear the better reason" by your sophistry, that you have driven me to the extent of mine; and in a moment, when my feelings are most awake, I have nothing left to say on a subject, in which they are deeply interested by the commanding though silent eloquence of manly grief; a fine form and noble countenance, reduced and faded by the cruel hand of virtuous enthusiasm.

VOL. V.

M

Talbot

Talbot is, or rather the remains of that once gay volatile young man are, now in Paris. He quitted England at the instigations of his best-beloved friend—which friend is my Montgomery. You see we still are actuated by a fate, in which we seem to form two undivided links of the same chain. The rescue of his worthless mother from a nest of villains, into which her own vices have betrayed her, strengthened by other hopes, which I am not at liberty to disclose, impelled him to take a journey, which he was little able to perform.

The good Valtimond was ready to receive him at Calais; but finding him on his arrival there so weak, and enfeebled by the fatigue of travelling, that he could not proceed any further at that time; after having staid with him several days instead of taking the route to A——, the residence of Mrs. Gowarth, as they had previously agreed by letter, he brought him by easy stages immediately to

to Paris, where we have with difficulty prevailed on him to continue, till his nerves are somewhat invigorated, and more fit to encounter a task, which threatens to put them to the severest trial.

I no sooner beheld the interesting figure of the unfortunate youth, whom you conceive it your duty to reduce to the precincts of the grave, in order to preserve him from the compassion of the world, than I entered into the just indignation, which I excited in your breast ; and blushed for the comparison I had ignorantly made, although the presence of Sir Charles Stanley must ever be a sufficient excuse for the error, in the absence of the only person who can prove that so striking a superiority belongs to the form of a man. There is a life and fire in the countenance of your unhappy swain, even under the heaviest depression of spirits ; and at the sound of your name, an animation takes light in every feature, in which there is something

more than I ever beheld in the human face. If you have heretofore suspected that my heart was in danger of swerving from its fidelity, are you not trembling for it now? Be not alarmed—I will not offend you with comparisons, fully conscious that I should on your own principles be depreciating the man, who wants no borrowed graces to ennoble him in my esteem. I have already given you the portrait of Montgomery, with a pen uninfluenced by passion: my heart has now lost its impartiality, and on that topic you perhaps would find *it* equally divested of its truth. He received a packet yesterday from the north, in which his father and friends expressed the fullest approbation of his suit: no obstacles therefore intervening, the lawyers are to be employed forthwith. It will be necessary, it is supposed, for one of the parties to make a trip to England before the completion of the deeds; but the awful ceremony is to be performed

formed here by our ambaffdor's chaplain, after which my father will accompany us in the tour of Italy and Naples.

I do not like this fummary method of proceeding towards an event which forms the moft important crisis of this life: but there are fo many in a league againft me, that refiftance would be vain.

Write, my beloved fifter, and not in a ftain cruelly to remind me, that affliction is ftill too near my heart to permit the uninterrupted dominion of its fairer rival.

O! that you would fuffer your language to convey a charm to chafe the ugly image of defpondency from a circle, which wants your fiat only to complete its blifs.

I perhaps already have offended, in adminiftering the only cordial in my power to the dejected fpirits of your noble lover. I told him ingenuoufly, (indeed I had not the refolution to deny) that you fympathife moft acutely in the

wound you have inflicted, and that, although your sufferings were not so instantaneously alarming in their effects, they are as deep, and I fear equally indelible with his own—nay, to confess the truth, at the utmost risque of your displeasure, I gave your last letter into his hands, from whence I apprehend I shall never receive it more—nay, frown not; for the error was scarcely committed, ere it was repented of with sincerity of heart, owing to the consequence it produced, which was little less than a temporary distraction. Talbot's uncontrollable passions had not suffered him to suppose the existence of a sincere and ardent affection in any breast, which could support the resignation of its object; much less that such a resignation could be a voluntary sacrifice at the shrine of a less despotic deity. He contemns not the claims of gratitude and duty; but love at present so entirely tyrannizes over his heart, that he can do little homage to any other power.

If

If you still continue inexorable, and determined to impose on this amiable young man, a life of penance, for the absurd ambition of his aunt, and the infamy of his mother, I shall begin to suspect that you are not the same gentle, affectionate Selima, who have brushed away many a falling tear from the cheek of your once less fortunate friend, and play-fellow,

JULIA WESTBURNE.

LETTER

LETTER CLXI.

SELIMA

TO

MISS WESTBURNE.

INDEED I am offended—offended did I say?—O ! Julia, forgive the misapplication of the word. I can never be offended, though I am at this moment infinitely distressed by an act of yours—wherefore, improvidently kind, would you seek to counteract my intentions? Alas ! because they meet not your approbation : and yet they should be of some worth, for they have cost me much. Think not to shake my resolution. Talbot has escaped the violence of the blow ; and I have advanced too far to recede.

Believe

Believe me likewise, when I protest, that though my heart bleeds with the most excruciating anguish in the arduous task, I have not once repented of the sacrifice I have made. No, my friend, there is something so consolatory in the consciousness of having acted right, that with it no misery can be insupportable, without it, no enjoyment can be complete. Why will you tear a wound, which you know is deep already by telling me, that the man, for whose honour I have bartered my own peace, is still a sharer in the pain, when on his restored tranquillity hang all the sublunary hopes and wishes, which now pervade my breast—tell me but that he is happy—that I am no longer the destroyer of his repose, and I can exclaim with the dying Christian, “O! Death where is thy sting, O! grave where is thy victory.”

But do not tell him, that I am interested in his fate—rather call me a jilt,
a fickle

a fickle, inconstant woman—a vain trifler—ah! no! there is no occasion to have recourse to falsehood, to prove that I am unworthy of being his wife—where indeed is the woman who merits so enviable a title? I will pray to Heaven incessantly, to direct him to some congenial soul, with something better to requite the tenderness of a noble heart, than a mere consciousness of its merit. No, my dearest Julia, would you lull my senses to contentment, it must not be by a representation of Talbot's grief; on the contrary, endeavour to withdraw his mind from an unfortunate attachment, and blessings abundant shall be yours.

It is said, that jealousy is always inseparable from true love. It may be so in those instances, where it is likewise accompanied by the soothing, though oft delusive form of Hope. From me the flattering vision is for ever vanished; and my affection instructs me not to wish the
amiable

amiable object of it miserable, because
 "misfortune has marked me for her
 own." Heaven only knows, how little
 I regard any enjoyment of this life, or
 life itself, when viewed in competition
 with his happiness. There is not any
 thing on earth, which I would not re-
 linquish to ensure its existence, except
 a conscious rectitude of heart.—I have
 been so long accustomed to repose an
 unlimited confidence in you, that the
 knowledge of your having recently be-
 trayed the trust, restrains not its natural
 ebullitions. Reserve in addressing myself
 to you, is so repugnant to my feelings,
 that though it is a measure dictated by
 prudence, I find it such an one as I am
 utterly unable hastily to adopt. Do not
 force me to deplore a weakness, which
 springs from a friendship, wherein, in the
 dreariest moments of my chequered pil-
 grimage, I have ever found a source of
 unmixed delight.

If

If you wish for the restoration of my peace, you must lay the foundation of it in the mind of Talbot. Instead of exalting me in his esteem, by telling him I sympathise in his pain, seize every opportunity to abstract his thoughts from its unhappy cause. Tomorrow we quit London for Hartlebury, the family-seat of my guardian. The house not having been inhabited for several years, required considerable repairs before it was fit for the reception of its mistress. And now my beloved Julia, after having evinced the impracticability of that reserve towards you, which is dictated by prudence, let me solemnly conjure you not to betray the trust, which I feel myself compelled to repose in you. Mention not my name in the presence of Talbot, at least suffer not your own partiality to act as a sanction for the same generous sentiment in his breast. Good Heavens—the only hope I have in this world, is to become an object of indifference to the
man—

man :—but I check my pen : this repining strain is a disgrace to the fortitude to which I am proud enough to aspire.

My friend is happy : let that consolatory thought occupy the mind and sustain the drooping heart of her .

SELIMA WORTHY.

LETTER CLXII.

SIR CHARLES SMITH STANLEY, BART.

TO

THE HON. VALTIMOND MONTGOMERY,

IT is with some pride and infinite pleasure I inform you, that, with the good care I have taken of my convalescent companion, he arrived here last night without suffering any apparent disadvantages from his journey, gratified to his utmost wishes in his darling theme, and finding by his side a faithful echo, by which every sound, conveying the praise of the beloved mistress of his heart, was reverberated on his ear. The violence of his impatience to reach the place of our destination was without difficulty

difficulty restrained. Every hour, in which I become more intimately acquainted with the character of this noble-minded young man, serves to exalt him in my esteem. It would be impossible to enumerate half the acts of benevolence, of which I have been an envious spectator in our progress hither. How lamentable is the reflection, that whilst he seems to chase away affliction, as he proceeds, it still lurks an irremovable inhabitant of his own breast; and that it is by sympathy alone, that he can partake of the gladness he imparts.

I used to think myself a man of some humanity; but in Talbot every virtue is accompanied with an alertness which leaves the same sentiment in its common mould no other exercise than merely to deplore the opportunity it has lost. Where he appears, ere sorrow seems to be revealed, the very traces of it are done away.

Though it was evening before we alighted at the inn, I found my influence (fortunately as it proved) insufficient to detain my friend a moment longer from the chateau of his wretched mother, which is situated at the distance of about half a league from the town, than merely to admit a short interview with the gentleman to whom your letters procured us an introduction, attended (though we were not so circumstanced as long to avail ourselves of it) with a very polite and hospitable reception. He not only furnished us with much necessary information, but urged so strenuously the danger of trusting ourselves unarmed amongst a set of wretches, who would not scruple committing any enormity which would secure to them their premeditated plunder; that our gallant soldier, who has too much real courage to affect a disregard of danger, was persuaded to dress himself *en militaire*; and I, on whom a
sword,

sword, in my travelling-dress, would have been deemed rather a questionable ornament, took care to provide myself with a horse-whip, the butt-end of which would have afforded a very weighty argument in my favour, had an active controversy taken place.

But to proceed without more circumlocution ; our appearance at the chateau of Madame Gowarth was as unexpected as we could desire. The girl from whom we first obtained admittance stared, as if she was unaccustomed to the approach of strangers ; but seeming wholly indifferent as to the motive of our visit, said she would enquire if the Abbè Grouillon was at home. I thought we had mistaken our direction, but the name was but too familiar to the ears of my fellow-traveller, and giving the Abbè a soldier's blessing, he insisted on being conducted, without a word, into the apartment of his mother. Our guide, alarmed at his expressions, and the stern aspect with which

they were delivered, hesitated not to obey his commands; and though a footman, who met us on the stairs, endeavoured to stop our progress, till he had an opportunity of apprizing his employer of the favour we intended him, we made our *entree* just in time to prevent the execution of a deed, which the pious ecclesiastic was guiding the hand of a poor miserable woman (rendered insensible for the purpose of facilitating his diabolical schemes) to sign. The chamber-door being open, the words "What! will you not comply with the request of your son?" ere we discovered the infernal group, or were perceived by them, met our ears. On one side of the bed knelt the Abbè, with his eyes fixed intently on a paper, which soon afterwards falling into our possession, proved to be a deed of gift, making over to him all the property which the mother of our friend had power to bequeath; on the other stood a woman, who held a glass
of

of liquors, whilst a man, who seemed to take no immediate part in the transaction, was walking silently about the room.

Our sudden appearance spread the marks of consternation over the countenances of them all; and the features of Talbot being instantly recognized by the wicked priest, he thought it most prudent, peaceably to surrender the fruits of the vintage, rather than enter into a contention with the heir of the vineyard, for which he was entirely unprepared. In the confusion of the moment, he dropped the instrument, by which some noble estates, with other valuable effects, would have been fraudulently alienated from the lawful heir, had I not seized that opportunity to secure the possession of it: for although it was then unsigned, I do not imagine, from the adroit iniquity of the hand by which it had been engrossed, that defect would have been suffered to have remained an
obstacle

obstacle to its validity. The principal once decamped, we were not long infested by his agents. In little more than half an hour after our arrival, the mansion was totally evacuated of its late inhabitants, excepting only its mistress, and our innocent conductor, the little kitchen-girl.

The places of the fugitives were filled up in part by our servants, and an orderly middle-aged woman, recommended to us by Madame Dupuis, the wife of your correspondent at A——, who thought such an assistant indispensibly necessary, as the female attendant of Mrs. Gowarth was an infamous colleague of the Abbè, of whom it equally behoved us to beware.

How our poor friend, in his present valetudinarian state, will bear the premature death of his unhappy parent, Heaven knows. Premature I may with too much confidence pronounce it, tho' I differ in opinion with the physician
 who

who was called in at my request, on perceiving the desperate situation of my patient. He is a man of great abilities and apparent integrity, and from whom I cannot positively disagree without much diffidence. But not to torment you with any of our medical jargon, whilst he, without reserve, ascribes the symptoms of Mrs. Gowarth's disorder to nothing less than the effects of poison, I think they may more probably have been produced by the excessive use of strong liquors. She has been in a constant delirium and burning fever ever since we arrived. She still thinks herself under the care of Grouillon and his confederates, whom she often reviles and execrates, crying continually, " You want to murder me," whenever any medicine is administered, or any effort made to restrain the emotions of her frenzy. Sometimes she calls upon her son, who is constantly by her side, insensible of his presence, to deliver her from their hands ;
but

but oftener on the name of Woodley, which is always accompanied by a look of inward terror and encreased distraction. Once casting her eyes wildly on her new attendant, with a mingled expression of joy and horror, such as I never before beheld, and clasping her in her arms,

“ Dear Woodley !” she exclaimed, “ are you come at last ; let them kill me now ; take the key,” rummaging for her pockets as she spoke, “ there, there, you know the drawer,” in a half whisper, pointing to a cabinet, on which I had often observed she gazed with much anxiety : then in an agony, supposing herself not instantly understood, “ the papers, woman,” she furiously screamed.

At that moment her ravings became more terrifying than ever ; and it was with the utmost difficulty she was prevented dashing herself against the floor. This violent paroxysm was succeeded by a state of torbid insensibility, from which she

He has not yet been roused; and my
 kind colleague has seized the opportu-
 nity to prevail on her son, whose vir-
 tuous mind participates acutely of those
 stings which guilt should only be capa-
 ble of inflicting on the guilty, to seek
 that repose for which he has great occa-
 sion. Although I flattered myself his
 journey hither was performed without
 impediment to his recovery, the inci-
 dents which ensued have been such as,
 operating on a common mind, with a
 frame imperfectly recruited from the ra-
 vages of a dangerous illness, such as
 Talbot has recently endured, must have
 been ill-sustained: then what have we
 to apprehend from the ardency of his
 feelings? In truth, more than at this
 moment I dare trust myself to confi-
 der. I love this young man, Montgo-
 mery, though a late acquaintance, as if
 he had been an old friend; nor is it for
 his own merits only that I thus regard
 him, but for the sake of that angelic
 woman

woman also whose happiness depends on his.

It has already been a subject of much wonder to you, that rivalry, which through all ages has been a gage of the most implacable enmity amongst men, should have proved the cement of affection between us. The instance is a singular one, I believe, yet it is unquestionably the case; and, on a review of past circumstances, may not be so irreconcilable with reason as it at first appears. Neither of us lose any thing, you are to remember, by each other's passion for the same object. For my own part, should I have been less unfortunate, had the extraordinary attractions of Captain Talbot never discovered to the gentle Selima that her heart was susceptible of love? Whilst he, secure as he is in the possession of her affections, must be too sensible of her charms to imagine their influence have been unfelt by any one but himself. In short, with the bloom
of

of health upon his cheek, I think he must be endued with more humility than is consistent with the military character, to suffer the pangs of jealousy to undermine his peace. Even faded as it is, there is a "provoking probability of succeeding about the fellow," which must crush the idea of rivalry in the bud.

On the suggestion of Monsieur Pierrot, the physician, which I before mentioned, search was immediately made for the supposed perpetrator of the crime: but the result of the inquiry has not yet transpired; and, to speak the truth, I do not earnestly wish it to succeed: for, though I am fully persuaded that the dreadful extremity to which this miserable woman is reduced, has been wilfully accelerated, yet I do not think there is or will appear any proof of criminality. Brandy is a more subtle assassin than arsenic, and performs its work with impunity. Besides, the people we

have to deal with have taken the federation-oath, which is a new absolution for every crime before a Jacobinical tribunal.

Present my best respects to your lovely mistress, and her good father.

Talbot confessed to me, as we were travelling together, that being a constant witness of the uninterrupted enjoyment of mutual love, though from his soul he rejoiced at the deserved felicity of his friend, was a corrosion to his wounded mind which he had found it almost impossible to endure. Therefore, should his time be unoccupied by an engagement of a very different description, when an event takes place which approaches with every smiling presage, I trust you will not urge him to be a witness of a scene in which his friendly sympathy could only aggravate the consciousness of his own less auspicious fate.

Adieu. I shall not fail to transmit you a circumstantial detail of every occurrence

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currence which appears worthy of observation; remaining invariably your devoted friend,

CHARLES SMITH STANLEY.

O 2

LETTER

LETTER CLXIII.

SELIMA

TO

MISS WESTBURNE.

Hartlebury.

WHEN I wrote last we were on the eve of our removal to this place, an intention which, as you see by the date hereof, was accordingly put in execution. The first day's journey was unmarked by any occurrence worthy observation; but the second was rendered memorable by an incident on which I cannot yet, nor ever shall, I believe, reflect without feeling a sensation of the deepest horror, at the same time acknowledging and glorifying the infinite justice

justice of an unerring Providence, which suffers not the innocent to be unprotected, nor the guilty to go unpunished.

On entering the town of S. a multitude of people retarded for some minutes the progress of the carriage-wheels; and scarcely had we inquired the cause of such an extraordinary assemblage, and been informed that it was occasioned by a savage curiosity to behold two fellow-creatures launched into eternity, than we saw two wretched culprits slowly drawn towards the place of execution. I shuddered at the melancholy spectacle; and Mrs. Leslie being no less affected, we proceeded in silent contemplation of the dismal scene: the narrowness of the road leaving but a trifling space between us and the fatal cart, as I regarded with a look of heartfelt pity one of the devoted sufferers, who, being a female, seemed to have the most forcible claim on my compassion, I discovered the well-known face of Mrs.

Woodley. Gracious Heaven! there is no describing my emotions at that instant. My kind friend perceived the cause of my agitation; and her own feelings participated too sensibly in its effects, for her to wonder at their violence on a mind enervated by affliction. By her kind attention I was preserved from fainting till we reached the inn, where we intended only to have changed horses; but the event we had just encountered, was sufficient to derange our plans: in short, we knew not what to do; one was as unable to act as the other was to advise; neither of us felt able to continue our route. Yet how could we hope for the recomposure of our spirits in a place where the dying speech and confession of a woman with whom both had once been intimately acquainted, and for whom I, in particular, had entertained the warmest sentiments of esteem and gratitude, would be every moment reverberating on the ear.

The

The landlady, observing the marks of dismay in our countenances, officiously favoured us with her attendance; and as she handed each of us a glass of water at our request, endeavoured to ensure its efficacy by the soothing power of her own eloquence; "Well, really," said she, "it is a sad thing to be so tender-hearted. It was an ugly fight for sure; we have not such things oftens with us, and yet I would not cross the threshold to look at one of them, if they were to happen every day: Come, come Miss," cried she, as a deep sigh escaped me, "do not take on in this fashion, they have but met with their desarts I reckon; but you are like me I see, too good-natured to live in this world. Well, says I to my husband, if I were a judge, I would no more order a fellow-creature to be hanged, than I would be hanged myself. Then he calls me a fool, and axes me, how I should like to be murdered in my bed? To be sure there is no deny-
ing

ing but murder is a sad thing, and ought to meet with as good as it brings : and for that matter indeed, so is taking away ones property ; for as I say, what signifies life, if one has not means wherewithal ?”

“ Pray do you know,” said Mrs. Leslie, seizing the first opportunity of edging in the question, “ for what crime these poor wretches were condemned to suffer ?”

“ For nothing at all, I believe,” returned she, “ but signing other people’s names on some bills, and getting money for them, as if they had been their own.”

“ For forgery they were executed then,” exclaimed my guardian. “ Who shall escape the vengeance of offended Heaven ! Pray do you know any thing further of them, who they were, or from whence they came, or” —

“ Yes, sure,” said she, most freely communicative, “ they lived a matter of half a year or better over the way : Look, your ladyship ; in yonder shop in the

the corner, where they fold stockings and gloves, and worsted, and such sort of ware, and did very well, as long as they could be content with the fruits of honesty ; but, lack-a-day ! that was but for a bit : The old woman's name is, or was I suppose I may say by this time, Woodley ; and her nephew, poor fellow ! was called Christopher Keeling : but they say that he never would have come to an untimely end, if it had not been for his wicked aunt, who was always setting him on mischief ; and indeed it looks bad enough on her side, running away to France, as she would fain have done, when the hue-and-cry was after them, leaving the young man to bear the brunt of it himself ; but she was nabbed in her career, before she got out of England, and has been made to pay for all her ill deeds at last. It is whispered, that she is the natural child of some great knight or 'squire, and that she has been much
noticed

noticed in the family. It is a pity but they had taught her to take better ways, I think."

This narrative was not much calculated, as you will suppose, to remove the dejection of my spirits. Towards the conclusion of it, I was so greatly affected, and sighed so deeply, that mine hostess began to fear she had changed her tune to a wrong key, and thinking it necessary to palliate the censure she had inadvertently expressed.

"Nay, for my part," added she, "I know nothing at all but what I hear folk say; and they may be belied, mayhap, as many a good body has been before them; but my husband knows all the truth, for he reads the newspapers as constantly as they come out. I have enough to do, believe me, to mind my own business. He shall wait on you, if you please, and tell you all about it. But what shall I send your ladyships in for

for dinner? for I'm sure you both look as if you wanted some refreshment."

This was a proposition in which we did not feel much interested; yet we chose not to disappoint the expectations of our loquacious friend. A good dinner was served up accordingly in a back room, and soon removed, without having suffered much diminution. In about an hour afterwards, we summoned resolution to continue our route to this place, where we did not arrive till late, but the air was uncommonly serene, and the Moon shone with her utmost splendour, so that there was nothing wanting to render the latter part of our journey truly delightful, but spirits undisturbed, light and congenial with the calm and brilliant scene.

I cannot say much of the beauties of Hartlebury-hall, the family-seat of my beloved patroness. Its situation is extremely low, and has been thought unhealthy, owing to the excessive damps it suffers

suffers from the rains in Winter, or the fogs in Summer, arising from the marshy country which surrounds it. On this account it has long been uninhabited, its late possessor being a man of weak spirits, and particularly attentive to his constitution; but its present amiable mistress anxiously wishes to make it her residence for some portion of the year, that she may enjoy the power more effectually of sharing, in some degree, with her tenants, the produce of their own industry.

The dreadfully affecting adventure which we have been so unfortunate as to encounter, was an attack upon my spirits, which, in their present enfeebled state, they were not able to resist.

Perhaps, with the flinty world, compassion for a wretch, who has been guilty of the most cruel injuries in the bosom of the injured, may be deemed an excusable weakness. It may be so, I do not aspire to its approbation. I know I

am

am a poor creature, more addicted to pity than revenge. If Mrs. Woodley wronged me, of which there exists no more than a vague, presumptive proof, alas! she has bitterly atoned for her offence; and if it were really so, my unexpected appearance before her eyes in her latest moments, must have greatly aggravated the agony of her sufferings, for by the sudden emotions of the dying culprit, Mrs. Leslie informed me, that her attention was first excited when she instantaneously discovered the cause of mine.

—Forgive me for addressing you in a style so mal-a-propos to the general joy, which, at this time, I trust, surrounds my dearest friends. I suspect that even now the lovely Julia Westburne is no more, but that a strong resemblance of her may be discovered in the happy bride of a deserving lover. On this occasion I thought it impossible to be sad, and that without an effort cheerfulness

would have condescended to resume a temporary sway in the breast of her once distinguished votary; but my peculiar fate prevailed, which takes delight in counteracting my designs in proportion to their tendency towards my gratification.

I tremble when I trust my pen with the name of Talbot. Only tell me that he is restored to health and happiness, and I have done with it for ever; only relieve me from the torturing consciousness of having destroyed his peace, and I will submit to my own rigid destiny, when he is no longer involved in its decree, without repining.

Farewel, my beloved sister, may every blessing accompany you through life; the possession of which, an union formed on the basis of mutual love and congenial worth, is best calculated to ensure. To this wish, I am persuaded, neither your good father, or the happy Benedict, will want any additions in their
favour;

favour ; they will, I am sure, consider their proper share in it, as more acceptable than any particular compliment they could possibly receive from the pen of your ever affectionate

SELIMA WORTHY.

P. S. Mrs. Leslie would not suffer me to say a word on her part, therefore I conclude you will be favoured with congratulations from her own hand, when she is well satisfied they will not be premature.

LETTER CLIV.

SIR CHARLES SMITH STANLEY, BART.

TO

THE HON. VALTIMOND MONTGOMERY.

LAST night, about six o'clock, Mrs. Gowarth departed this life, after having been in full possession of her senses from the moment of her awaking from that death-like slumber, which I mentioned to you in a former letter, but in a state of mind, which I have suffered too much in witnessing for an attempt at its description. Talbot knelt continually at the bedside of his wretched parent, praying for a remission of her sins, participating the agonies which his tenderness could not mitigate, and listening to confessions of the

the blackest guilt, confessions fit to harrow up a heart of adamant, even unconnected with *her* who perpetrated, or *him* who suffered from, the horrid deed. Poor Talbot! how excruciating then must have been the sensations of their son, with feelings most tremblingly alive, with a mind which shrinks not only from every ignoble sentiment, but which nurtures not an idea, when honour and integrity sparkles not on its face. Is it possible to conceive what must be the misery of such a son on the full disclosure of the infamous vices of her to whom he owed his birth, or the injuries of him—but I will say no more, perhaps I have gone too far already. To our friend, when his spirits are capable of the task, it alone belongs to conceal or to divulge the circumstances of his mother's crimes; at present, his noble faculties are buried in deep and melancholy meditations. Profound and heavy sighs force a passage now and then from

his oppressed bosom ; but he has not uttered a complaint, nor once given words to his reflections on the late event : indeed, he scarcely ever speaks, except on those occasions wherein his voice is necessary to give such orders as cannot properly proceed from any one but himself ; and in such cases, they are issued with the apparent fortitude of unshaken nerves and a maturity of judgment, which does not belong to his years.

I have imparted to Captain Talbot your acquiescence with his request not to postpone a ceremony on account of his absence, at which he could not be present without experiencing a variety of emotions which it would interrupt your happiness to excite ; yet it is not without a sincere regret, that he relinquishes the pleasure of beholding the felicity of his friend, to avoid the aggravation of his own pain.

He insists on my quitting him on the 24th of this instant, the day after the funeral

funeral obsequies of his mother (which are to be performed with all possible privacy, consistent with the laws of decency and the custom of the country in which she died) in order to attend as his proxy at the solemnization of your nuptials; and as I have not the heart to contend with him on so favorite a point, nor have any inducement to it, but the present state of his health and spirits, if you will accept the offered substitute, you may expect to see me within the course of a few days after that time.

The cabinet, to which we were directed by Miss Westburne's maid, and the contents of which, during our journey hither, almost entirely engrossed the sanguine imagination of our friend, still remains unopened, and, I should have supposed, unthought-of, but for a circumstance which did not escape my observation, which was, that to possess the key of that piece of furniture was Talbot's

bot's first consideration after the decease of his mother.

This morning, by his permission, and for the general satisfaction, though Monsieur Pierrot, from the succeeding symptoms of the disorder, had been some time a convert to my opinion, the body of Mrs. Gowarth was opened; and no marks of poison being discernible, one of the subordinate coadjutors of Grouifson, the only one of the crew who had been taken up on suspicion of murder, had his liberty restored, with which he was perfectly satisfied.

With best regards to your good father and bride elect, in which our poor, dejected friend silently, though no less fervently, unites, I remain your ever-faithful and much-devoted friend,

C. S. STANLEY.

LETTER

LETTER CLXV.

 THE HON. MRS. MONTGOMERY

TO

SELIMA.

THOUGH the congratulations of my sweet friend were somewhat premature, yet they were not perfectly out of season, as she may perceive by the signature of this short epistle ;—short it must necessarily be, as we are but just returned from the ambassador's chapel, the gentlemen finishing their breakfast, and to say nothing of the perturbation of my spirits in this critical conjuncture. Perhaps it is a fortunate circumstance, that the hurry of preparing for our intended tour

tour through Switzerland, Italy, and the Lord knows where, has not afforded me much time to reflect on the important influence the few moments just gone by must inevitably retain over the future prospects of my life. But, as I have said, time presses.

You conjure me to tell you that Talbot is restored to health and happiness ; but, unless the information were consistent with the sacred laws of truth and sincerity, I should only be forfeiting by it all the credit my veracity has hitherto, I trust, supported in your esteem. Alas, poor soul ! for some time past troubles and distresses have been multiplying upon him ; but now, I flatter myself, all but the remembrance of them, excepting those over which one inexorable goddess particularly presides, are utterly removed by the death of his wicked mother.

This wretched woman left the world in a manner not less horrible than, tho' not

not so publickly ignominious as, the vile instrument of her guilt; and I earnestly hope their sufferings here have been an acceptable atonement for their transgressions. Your critical arrival in S. was no less extraordinary than, in the present state of your spirits, it was unfortunate. Did ever such a son spring from such a parent? The awful ceremony of this morning was to have been postponed till the return of Captain Talbot; but finding his spirits unequal to the scene, Sir Charles Stanley, who attended him in lieu of my good man—
 “ Well, well—I come, I come.”

“ If you do not, I shall fetch you.”
 Monstrous! only hear the tyrant-husband, how he storms! How could I be so imprudent as to resign my liberty, in a country where the people are enjoying it in its utmost luxury, with broken heads and empty pockets? Perhaps, when I find myself under some despotic government, obliged to submit to the
 old-fashioned

old-fashioned enjoyments of quiet, ease, and comfort, I may wear my fetters with a better grace.

Mrs. Leslie's attention can never be specified towards me, without levying a contribution on my gratitude; yet it is a tax of so sweet a nature, that the more frequently it is demanded, with the more pleasure it is paid.

Let your letters be directed to —, which will be the first place of our sojournment for any fixed time.

And now believe, dearest girl, that I shall ever remain equally yours, under any station, any clime, or, I was going to say, under any name:—but, I thank Heaven, there is not, belonging to any potentate on earth, one for which I would exchange that of your affectionate friend,

JULIA MONTGOMERY.

LETTER

LETTER CLXVI.

CAPTAIN TALBOT

TO

SIR CHARLES SMITH STANLEY, BART.

WILL you pardon me, my dear Stanley, when I confess to you, that my spirits have been sunk into so unfociable a train, as to feel a kind of groveling relief in having lost the company of a highly-esteemed friend? The late afflictions in which I have been involved, instead of seeking to be mitigated by participation, were of a nature to shrink from disquisition. In short, I had not courage to converse on a subject whereby my rage being, most probably, excited, I should have forgotten myself, and been

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betrayed into some impiety, on which I never could have reflected without horror : I therefore cautiously avoided a temptation which I durst not trust my temper to withstand ; neither had I resolution, in your presence, to unlock the cabinet, the unexamined contents of which kept my mind suspended on the rack of hope, fear, curiosity, and impatience : but scarcely had you passed the outer gate, than, with a trembling hand, I ventured to commence the momentous inquiry, in which I proceeded above an hour, without finding any thing either of the least intrinsic or relative importance, though I had opened several private drawers, well calculated for the depositories of hidden treasure ; but so far it appeared pretty evident, that I had been preceded in my search ; and my hopes sunk on the observation ; but fortunately happening to thrust my hand, as a dernier effort, into a sort of till under the escrutoire, I found it resisted by
a piece

a piece of wood, between which and the exterior pannel there seemed to be a considerable cavity, which causing rather an aukward contraction of the adjoining part, I imagined had not been left there without design; and in the end the conjecture proved well founded: for, after having persevered some time in rummaging, spying, feeling, and pummelling at the inside wood, without success, I removed the piece of furniture from the wall, and went through the same process once more on the back of it, the appearance of which did not at first yield much encouragement to my hopes. But at length, when my spirits were almost exhausted with the shaking, hammering, and outrageous bustle, to which my impatience had driven me, I perceived one of the boards give way, and thereupon applying my penknife to one side of it, it slid back without much resistance, and I discovered a little locked drawer, the key of which I was

not so lucky as to possess. This, however, was but a trifling difficulty, after the many I had overcome; but in this critical juncture my dastardly legs refused to support me any longer, though I rallied repeatedly, and was ready to cry out indignantly with Lady Macbeth, "Art thou a man?" But all this bluster was of no consequence: curiosity even was obliged to submit; and at the moment I had obtained an opportunity of gratifying it, I was reduced to the necessity of throwing myself on the bed, where Pierrot found me in so languid a state, when he came to dinner by your invitation, that he would fain have pestered me with his nostrums; but tho', I thank Heaven, I am perfectly untainted with any of the French fanaticism, I had courage enough remaining in my crazy frame, to rebel against such an innovation on the rights of man; or, in terms more applicable, and infinitely more accordant

cordant to my principles, on the constitution of an Englishman.

“ My good Sir,” said I, “ if you will be kind enough to visit me as a friend, I shall receive you with open arms, but if you persist in attending me as a physician, I shall wish you and your prescriptions at the devil. The doctor smiled, and took me in my own way, so I rose, hobbled down stairs, and partook with him, not very sparingly I assure you, of as chearful a meal as possible, when a share of the mirth depended on such a *pauvre miserable* as myself. With much good sense, he is not devoid of that true and liberal humour which gives to society its highest zest. From the sweets therefore of this agreeable disposition in my companion, a repast tolerably well relished, and a moderate portion of genuine Burgundy, I flatter myself I received as much benefit as I should have done from any bitter draughts in the whole pharmacopeia, had I had do-

cility enough to have made the experiment ; yet pleasantly as the time passed, I did not forget the unfinished task I had in hand, as the evening advanced, I grew most restlessly impatient to be alone, and should certainly have intimated my wish to my guest, under the plea of having some particular business to transact, had not a summons from a sick person in the neighbourhood come just in time to rescue me from the necessity of so unpleasant an expedient. Immediately on his departure, I returned to my mother's apartment, furnished with a small chisel, and such tools as seemed requisite for executing my design : but happening to look towards her bed as I passed, with a sensation of the deepest horror, reflecting on the agonies of her last moments, I saw her watch still hanging in its usual place ; and no sooner had I cast my eyes upon it, but a brilliant ray of the setting Sun darted on the chain, and discovered a diminutive key pendant from

from one of the links, which I do not think I could have perceived at the distance from it at which I stood, had it not been so critically illuminated, as the room was lighted only by one window, the shutters of which I had myself opened in the morning. It would ill become a soldier to be superstitious, yet I confess there was something so grateful to my feelings in this little adventitious incident, and so animating, that for some moments I was rapt, and unable to avail myself of the assistance with which I thought some guardian angel had vouchsafed to favour me, an idea which was more forcibly impressed on my mind, when, on applying the little new-found prize to the aperture of the private drawer, it turned with ease, and made me master of its secret treasures. An indescribable panic again attacked me: God knows I had sufficient cause to tremble! Would not the stoutest heart have shrunk in the performance of such a task?

a task? You know in part what I had to expect, what, alas! it was my evil destiny to encounter in all its blackest horrors: yet for mercy's sake be tender of my mother's fame, because she was the mother of a sincere and grateful friend; forget, if possible, that she was his father's — You are but too able to fill up the sentence which my pen is not qualified to conclude. Let the subject from henceforth be buried in oblivion, or if it will exist, let it exist in silence only in the bosom of their son; yet there is a wretch, whose infamy calls aloud for vengeance; and were it not for her sake with whom she has long lived in a confederacy of guilt, she should not lose the reward due to the enormity of her crimes. Her name is Woodley, and she appears to be the natural child of my grandfather's younger brother, who died not long after her birth. It is in a correspondence with this woman that a long series of iniquity was disclosed,

closed, and it was owing to the machinations of this infernal fiend, that the beautiful Selima lost the affection, or the protection rather, of my worthy aunt, whose character shines the more resplendent from the base medium through which it is represented ; and by the same reptile was she driven, destitute and friendless, in the dead of the night, from her only home. But I cannot go on ; my blood boils at the idea, and unless I were to amuse you with execrations, not a word will flow naturally from my irritated mind. O Stanley, were you to see the patient sufferings of *your* much esteemed, and *my* passionately adored, Selima thus inhumanly described !—but be comforted, for they are no more : no, my friend, let me solace my long distracted senses with the blest thought, that all her scruples will be soon removed. Perhaps you may not have given me credit, when I have sworn, that she was honourably descended.

scended. I can now however give a ratification to the oath, which may bid defiance to incredulity itself. Jewels are but seldom the property of the vulgar; but to make myself understood, which I suppose you begin to think a necessary consideration:

In the last will of my deceased aunt, is bequeathed to her lovely ward, five thousand pounds at present, with the like sum in addition, at the death of Mrs. Leslie, her now surviving friend, who is to enjoy the interest of it for her life. These, with many charitable bequests to her poor neighbours, have been most scandalously and fraudulently withheld, and were it not for the interposition of Providence, which seldom, even in this world, fails to take a part in the distribution of right, would have been utterly suppressed.

The jewels, which were secreted in the same parcel, though not numerous, are of considerable value; but the articles

ticles most renovating to my spirits, are the letters which accompanied them, from Miss Worthy's mother, wherein are clearly evident, the hand and diction of a well-accomplished woman; besides a beautiful miniature picture, in which is so striking a resemblance of her angelic daughter, that I know not how I shall be able to resign it to its right owner; nor will I relinquish it, by Jupiter, on any other terms than in exchange for a more correct copy of the heavenly image, which is deeply engraven on my heart.

I suppose the vile priest, with whom my infatuated mother was latterly connected, notwithstanding her conversion to his faith, and the character of father confessor, in which he must accordingly officiate, was never entrusted with the disgraceful transactions of her former life, in consequence of which, the very singular precaution she had used in secreting them, together with the confused
state

state to which I imagine her senses had been long reduced, to answer the wicked purposes of the wretches to whose arts she was self-devoted, prevented her destroying the flagrant testimonies of her enormous guilt ; guilt in which my welfare (grant me patience Heaven!) in most of its instances appears in the black correspondence I have just perused, to have been made the ostensible provocation: nevertheless, though my mother was the contriver, and I was the pretended cause, of all her sufferings, Miss Worthy shall be undeceived, she shall know her enemies, and exonerate her friends. The character of my worthy aunt shall no longer be loaded with the obloquy of her sister's crimes ; it is an act of justice which I owe to her memory, and to the feelings of an honest man.

In such an extraordinary conjuncture, I flatter myself that you will not refuse to make the request, nor the gentle Julia
(I know

(I know not by what other name she is at this moment to be denoted) hesitate to favour me with a direction to her beloved friend, when she knows that it is merely a matter of business abstracted from every tenderer consideration, by which I am now compelled, *much against my will*, to sue for her indulgence. Do tell a few lies, my dear fellow, with your usual gravity, and you will certainly prevail. Your conscience cannot suffer from the weight of them, whilst they are all founded upon truth, and meant to procure a blessing on your friend.

I intend to write to the happy bridegroom by the next post, not doubting but, by the time he receives my letter, the rites of Hymen will have dubbed him with that honourable title. Envidable mortal! Yet whilst I feel most keenly the contrary disposition of my own obdurate fate, my congratulations will not be the less sincere. I submit to

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you

a discretionary power to reveal to him the painful circumstances subsequent to our journey hither ; he knows too much already, and is too much interested in my happiness not to partake of every thing by which it is affected.

I know not how you mean to dispose of your time, when the festivity of the present occasion no longer demands your presence. For my own part, I shall soon be heartily tired of residing in this great house, without a soul to converse with, except the charitable doctor now and then, when he is not more beneficially engaged. I might enlarge my society, no doubt ; but I have so many inducements to return to England, and so few to continue where I am, that if you will favour me with a passport to the fair arbiters of my fate, with all possible expedition, the next moment I shall embark. Heaven grant me a propitious gale, to waft me to the port of happiness ! Stanley, I must hope ; despondency

dency suits not my complexion. For twenty-four hours, at least, hope has been the ruler of my heart ; and so well has actuated the whole body corporate, that it has almost made a man of me again—no longer a dull, phlegmatic, November Englishman, meditating on the dissolution of soul and body—but gay, volatile, and meagre, as *Le François*, without the clog of new-fangled Gallic liberty at his heels. But, alas ! to a man born under the influence of a British atmosphere, thought will recur, and apprehension of the approaching cloud will interrupt the enjoyment of the present sunshine. Love and fear are inseparable companions, or what have I to doubt ? To doubt the veracity of those ruby lips, which have blessed my ears with an acknowledgment of a reciprocal affection, were to be an infidel indeed ; and are not the jewels, with the elegant letters and miniature of her mother annexed to them, sufficient to era-

dicate all distrust of the respectability of her origin from the minds of the most fastidious? Mrs. Aubrey's remembrance in her last will must likewise relieve her delicate feelings from the dread of any malicious odium, to which the supposed loss of the affections of so kind a friend might have given a specious gloss. She is no longer a beggar, as she has frequently termed herself, seeking an asylum from penury and indigence in the bounty of a generous lover, too regardless of himself. Thus has she talked to me till I have been half-distracted: now am I proof against all her sophistry, and will not suffer the demolition of my new born hopes.

Who would think I was addressing myself to a rival? Dear Stanley, if these extravagant ebullitions affect your peace, be assured they shall be restrained. Montgomery, arrived at the summit of felicity, will now laugh at the inconsistent rhapsodies and wailings of a poor devil

devil like myself, one moment raised on the pinnacle of hope, the next driven down again into the lowest abyfs of despair.—But I shall write for ever ; this is a subject which I never know how to conclude.

Your sincere friend in affliction,

HENRY TALBOT.

LETTER CLXVII.

SIR CHARLES SMITH STANLEY, BART.

TO

CAPTAIN TALBOT.

I Have been deeply interested for your patience, during the short interval since the receipt of your letter, which did not reach my hands till a whole fortnight had elapsed from the day on which it was dated ; and, after having followed us in a zigzag direction for that time, was somewhat fortunate at last, in catching us on the wing, as the plan of our route was altered after we left Paris. We departed from thence on that distinguished morn on which our enviable friend became a happy bridegroom, and
in

in that same auspicious hour in which the lovely bride, beguiled of her usual vigilance by the hurry and perturbation of her spirits, left, for a few seconds, on the breakfast-table, a letter, folded, sealed, and inscribed with the magic name of Selima Worthy, followed by that of Hartlebury-hall, ——shire, being the earthly temple of our celestial fair. I knew not then how materially you would be affected with the discovery, nor do I now, without some degree of trepidation, confess to you, that my flame, long as it has lain uncherished and dormant in my breast, had life enough to excite me to the boyish action of kissing the honoured paper on which the inanimate syllables were impressed.

Yes, I kissed the letter, I must acknowledge, were you to challenge me for the deed.—*Mais soyez tranquil*—my good friend, had it been the lady, you know I durst not have taken such a liberty for my soul. Moreover, you are
under

under an obligation to me, which, when known, I think must prove an unperishable cement of amity between us, but shall reserve the communication of it till that happy moment, which I trust is registered in the book of fate, wherein it will appear in the full resplendency of its own importance.

The happy trio, to which you consigned me *without regret*, having determined that this agreeable tour should immediately succeed the nuptial ceremony, I had not the resolution so soon to exclude myself from the party. Unfortunately, Mademoiselle, who accompanied the bride to the altar, was prevented quitting Paris by the indisposition of her mother. This, to most young men in my situation, would have been a very mortifying circumstance; but my mind is so engrossed by the image of one lovely woman, that I have lost all relish for flirtation, and am therefore, notwithstanding my veneration for
the

the sex, contented to confine my devoirs to the matronly part of it alone, or to such as have no personal pretensions to flattery or admiration: for by all who have, every single man is equally expected to do homage to their charms.

The vile woman you mentioned as having been a coadjutrix in the cruelties of Mrs. Gowarth, is no more; she has suffered an ignominious death in atonement for her transgressions, and poor Selima, through an unfortunate accident, was doomed to endure the pain of beholding her in the fatal cart.

But for the circumstance of the letter being left upon the table, I could not have gratified you with the knowledge of your mistresses obode; for though I made the request with the same zeal and earnestness as if the necessity for the enquiry had still existed, I found my utmost power of persuasion was only able to obtain an offer to make what she
knew

knew would be a fruitless application to her fair friend, fully determined not to incur her displeasure by a second violation of her trust.

I do not intend to accompany this worthy pair much further. My family begin to feel themselves aggrieved at my long absence, and to them I owe any sacrifice of self-gratification, were it possible for me to enjoy a greater than what I must ever experience in contributing to theirs : I shall therefore hope to meet you soon again upon our native shore.

The proximity of Oatley-farm (my father's rural habitation) to your estate at Heathcott, seems a circumstance propitious to my wish.

Surely some affairs in that neighbourhood, though they may not be *quite so retrograde* to your inclinations as those in which you expect to be engaged, may be of importance enough to attract some part of your attention, independent of the

the claim of friendship, to which, with
no small degree of confidence, I venture
to affix the name of

CHARLES SMITH STANLEY.

LETTER

LETTER CLXVIII.

CAPTAIN TALBOT

TO

SELIMA.

TURN not, I beseech you, with contempt and indignation from a superscription, which, though it comes from the hand of Talbot, imports you no offence. He writes not to upbraid. He has suffered. It was Miss Worthy's will that he should suffer, and he has done so without repining against an act, in the justice of which he implicitly confides, though it comes not within the scope of his understanding. Talbot was condemned even without the imputation of a crime, and he submitted to the cruellest of

of all punishments, without one remonstrance against the rigid severity of his judge; for to that judge, his life, his liberty, nay, his destiny, belongs. He writes not therefore to extenuate guilt, of which he is utterly unconscious, but to reveal a scene of iniquity, which he lately, with aggravated misery, has discovered; and in which he is too nearly, though innocently, concerned, to escape a share of the obloquy attached to so black a deed. But for mercy's sake, suffer your resentment to be tempered with compassion; only reflect, that the culprit is the man who loves you, and would devote his life most cheerfully to ensure your happiness, and whose existence only is the crime in which he has conspired against your peace. Behold him as a son, deeply sensible of, though unattainted with, the unworthiness of his mother; and surely you must acknowledge, that his punishment is complete. The disclosure of infamy, in

which by the ties of blood I am most intimately connected to you, in whose esteem only it is life to live, is a task of some difficulty, and in a disposition naturally tender, may surely hope to awaken the sentiment of commiseration.

O! Selima, condescend only to examine the enclosed packet with an unprejudiced judgment, and I am fully persuaded, the word inferiority will never more be permitted to wound my ear, unless that gentle bosom can possibly imbibe the cruel intention to rebuke me for the vices, which, though I was born to deplore, God be praised! it is not my destiny to inherit. No, if the affection which you once scrupled not to avow for the happy Talbot, is not extinguished in your breast, or has given place to that opposite passion, which is commonly remarked to be its only successor, strive not to conceal from me the change. I can brave the reality of evil with more fortitude, than the lingering torture

torture of suspense. If you will not graciously consent to ratify the engagement, which I was taught to believe wanted Mrs. Leslie's voice only for its confirmation, I shall know how to interpret the refusal. As to the family-pride of my deceased aunt, it is a subterfuge to which my reason will no longer yield. In her own hand you have a full acknowledgment of your merit, and her esteem; and the jewels and letters, which are enclosed in the parcel with her will, must suffice to convince you, that she was possessed of too irrefragable a proof of the respectability of your birth, to have any objections to receiving into her family a woman for whom she already felt a maternal affection, excepting such as were infused into her mind by those evil spirits, to whose malicious nature I shudder to observe, every thing innocent and amiable must be repugnant and offensive.

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Together

Together with the enclosed, which I have transmitted you, with a ray of hope, which has long been a stranger to my breast, I found the miniature picture, pathetically mentioned by your unhappy mother, which I ventured to retain as the hostage of her daughter's faith. Do not kill me with a resentment for a little fraud, which is but a poor retaliation on the fly thief, who has beguiled me of my heart, and made it irrecoverably her own. I am not insensible of the inestimable value attached to the representation of a parent's face by an orphan-child, whose eyes were never blessed with a sight of the original; yet such is the superabundant generosity of your poor, discarded lover, that he is ready to relinquish this precious pledge for such an inequivalent modus as a bit of ivory, impressed only with a faithful copy of your own features, than which, I am sure, in your estimation,

estimation, nothing can be more insignificant and unimportant.

And now my dear, hard-hearted girl, tell me sincerely what you intend to do with me at last. Surely that gentle frame cannot harbour the inhumanity, coolly and deliberately to determine on the death of a poor fellow, who never offended you, except by that common crime into which every man must fall, who suffers the malignant influence of your eyes! You have already made a desperate experiment, but if you are not absolutely bent upon murder, I would have you beware of repeating the attempt, for in a second trial, who knows but I may have recourse to a pistol, a dagger, or a bow-string, to assist your tedious executioner, master Cupid, whose arrows are so confoundedly blunt, that they wound thousands without killing one? for although the credit of my gallantry may suffer in the confession, I would much rather live in your arms,

than die in your absence: yet by my soul, I should esteem any means a most desirable *coup-de-grace*, which would rescue me from the insupportable anguish of the living death, which must be the effect of your unkindness.

If you are still inexorable to my suit, deny not the total extinction of your affection, if ever the deluded Talbot had the transitory good fortune to inspire you with a reciprocal regard.

You are no longer under the supposed censure of having incurred the disapprobation of your deceased friend, or in want of those advantages, family and fortune, which, though highly appreciated by the world, are condemned by me, as entirely irrelevant to my happiness, either in this life or in that which is to come. If you have any faith in my protestations (and I may boast of being above dissimulation, even in the affairs of the heart) I need not now inform you, that, were you destitute of
 them

them all, rich as you are in so many nobler endowments, you would be equally acceptable to me.

“ Let high birth triumph—what can be more great ?

“ Nothing, but merit in a low estate.”

Perhaps you may think a soldier never prays : but, appealing to the authority of corporal Trim, to corroborate my evidence, I will venture to assert, that I shall most incessantly pray to Heaven to dispose your heart to commiserate the wounds you have inflicted, and to return a gracious answer to your most humble suppliant, though most incorrigible lover,

HENRY TALBOT.

LETTER

LETTER CLXIX.

SELIMA

TO

MRS. MONTGOMERY.

SURELY *you* have not betrayed me, Julia. Forgive me, if I neglect a repetition of those congratulations and good wishes which my heart ceases not to dictate. Talbot has written to me, and interrupted the composure to which I was endeavouring to reduce my lately-irritated feelings. His letter is accompanied by a copy of the will of his beloved aunt, wherein she has bequeathed both to Mrs. Leslie and myself the sum of five thousand pounds. Yes, my friend, though an unhappy alien from every

every external instance of her affection, there still existed a spark of tenderness for the wretched outcast, in the bosom of my maternal friend, which would not suffer her name to be erased from the last testimony of all sublunary regard. It is this idea which consoles my mind, and sheds a melancholy pleasure over my spirits, which a mere acquisition of fortune, in my present situation, would not have had the charms to impart.

The communication of your new servant is well authenticated: the whole scene of iniquity is disclosed, through which my disgrace and misery were accomplished. In the performance of it, Mrs. Gowarth employed a subtle and active agent in the deceitful Mrs. Woodley, pretending to have been instigated in the base design by the hope of preserving the interest of her darling son from innovation. Good heavens! had I been acquainted with him then, and known that it was for his sake I suffered,
how

how such a knowledge would have sweetened the cup of adversity!—Now, alas! he shares in the bitter draught! which, on my part, instead of being diminished, is augmented, by his participation. Yet still I must flatter myself, that Talbot's is but a transitory grief. It is not possible, surely, that a passion, suddenly conceived for an object insignificant as myself, should have taken a lasting hold upon a mind invigorated as his is by good sense, manly fortitude, and that natural vivacity which is in itself a certain preservative from the repeated encroachments of melancholy and unavailing regret. I have the pleasure to observe, that, although his language serves to prove the unhappy ascendancy which an imprudent attachment still retains over his mind, that it is not bereft of that native gaiety, which, being the offspring of conscious rectitude and noble principles, is an ornament too attractive for the future tranquillity of my heart.

heart. Yet, notwithstanding all his virtues, he scruples not to use every subtle art, which, though incapable of shaking my resolution, renews and aggravates the pain of adhering to the laws which duty and gratitude prescribe, in which I consider myself as more closely bound than ever, and from which I am positively determined never intentionally to swerve.

Now scolding, now flattering, his letter is so characteristic of his volatile temper, that every line presents the animated countenance of Talbot to my view.—Alas! it is too seldom absent from “my mind’s eye.” But, indeed, it is a cruelty which corresponds not with his generous nature, to withhold from me the picture of a mother whose face I never saw. It was done with a futile hope, to force me to redeem it with a copy of my own. But he knows not my disposition, if he supposes me weak enough, after the torture I have endured,

to

to undermine a work, in which it has cost me so dearly to proceed thus far ; or to purchase the dearest earthly gratification to the prejudice of his peace.

A complimentary note, addressed to Mrs. Leslie, apologizing for the temporary suppression of his aunt's will, by merely saying its existence has been hitherto unknown to him, was enclosed in the packet, together with orders on his banker in London, for my legacy and her annuity. I should before have informed you, that by the words of the bequeather, my guardian is only to receive the interest of five thousand pounds, the principal of which is to devolve to me at her decease. Heaven shield me from its possession ! This dear pattern of benevolence, notwithstanding this ample and unexpected acquisition, will not suffer me to relinquish the five hundred pounds a year which she has bountifully lavished on me. So unbounded is her liberality, and so few are my necessities,

cessities, that I almost feel myself oppressed by so unmerited a kindness : and nothing could induce me to yield to the excess of it, but the knowledge that her happiness would be injured by my refusal.

How wonderful have been the vicissitudes of my life ! Without wearying you with a recapitulation of events, with which you are well acquainted, I must protest to you, that, after all the miseries I have experienced, after having suffered the utmost, I believe, that human nature can suffer from a want of the common necessities of life, I never felt an affliction comparable with that which now, in the midst of affluence and every blessing which is estimated by the world, an unfortunate acquaintance with highly-distinguished and superior merit has condemned me to endure. You will say, I fear, that it is a rod with which I am only self-corrected, and that I ought either to defeat its force, or

to submit to its stripes with resignation. Dear Julia, do not be too severe: tho', in one sense, it may be true that I am self-corrected, be assured my punishment is no less rigorous than if my direst enemy were to perform the task. My correspondence with you affords me the only opportunities I have to mourn the sacrifice I have made: do not grudge me this slender consolation, though it be a little tax levied on the great sum of your felicity, which is of that perfect and domestic nature, as, whilst it is contrasted, cannot be impaired, I trust, by the faintly-described distresses of an absent friend.

This letter is to accompany one from Mrs. Leslie, which she intends to entrust to the care of a private hand as far as Paris, from whence she says it will with more certainty be conveyed to you, than by the different mails to which otherwise it must be consigned.

Colonel

Colonel Audley has not neglected to pay his respects at Hartlebury-hall, where he must ever be sure of a friendly reception, whilst it is the habitation of its present mistress, in whose mind his kindred worth seems to have inspired little less than a sisterly affection; a calm, serene attachment, to which, in an earlier period of life, I think the sentiment would not have been long confined; but now, unless I am much deceived, it never will amount to more. This agreeable addition to our society in some measure dissipated the gloom of solitude, to which Mrs. Leslie's mind is not by nature formed. It is a penance, to which she is only subjected by her benevolence; and I was thankful for its intermission, though to this gentleman's family I cannot help attributing Talbot's discovery of our retreat. It would pain me infinitely to suspect you of having deceived me a second time; and I know Mrs. Poyntz blindly interests herself in the

U 2. accomplishment

accomplishment of his wishes, or rather she would sink his interest in the promotion of mine.

There can be no certainty in concealment; it would be unpardonable effrontery in me, to entertain an idea of secluding Mrs. Leslie from the intercourse of friendship. In my own resolution only I must confide; and Talbot shall find in it a friend, whose services, in the cool and unimpassioned moments of matured judgment, he shall freely acknowledge and generously applaud.

The most painful circumstance, explored in the examination of the packet I received from Captain Talbot, was a letter directed by my maternal friend, which by her care escaped the fraudulent artifice of my inhuman foe, and was lost at last by my own imprudence; but I ought not so to term an adherence to principle, the remembrance of which is the only file capable of blunting the arrows of a ruthless fate. But I must conclude :

conclude : I have a task in hand, which calls for more fortitude and reflection than falls to the share of your truly affectionate

SELIMA WORTHY.

P. S. I think we shall not remain long at this place. Mrs. Leslie is dissatisfied with the gloominess of the house, which was built in those times when safety was the most essential concern in the choice of situation, and she kindly flatters herself, that change of scene and air might do much towards restoring a vivacity which she too feelingly deplores.

LETTER CLXX.

SELIMA

TO

CAPTAIN TALBOT.

IT is with a painful gratitude, my much-esteemed friend, that I am induced, once more, to obtrude on your attention a name, which I flattered myself was, ere this, almost obliterated from your recollection: but to feel the weightiest obligations without attempting to express them, is a task which a generous mind is unable to perform.

You tell me, Sir, that if I persist in rejecting your hand, that my regard for you is no more. It is a reasonable surmise, and I earnestly entreat you not to discard

discard it from your thoughts; for believe me, it is not in the frame of the humble Selima you are to seek for merits congenial with your own. What, though the alluring forms of love or ambition may once have deluded my imagination, is that a proof that the same passions still agitate my breast? The wind itself, with all its sudden variations, is scarcely typical of the mutability of the human heart; nor do I consider myself as blameable, whilst I do not profess emotions I no longer feel: therefore, my good Sir, condemn not, but rather admire and emulate, the transition you have observed in mine.

After what I have already said, I presume I may venture to urge the dutiful submission I owe to the designs and wishes of your honoured aunt, on which the recently discovered instances of her beneficence, which you have nobly rescued from oblivion, not only presents many new, but serves to validate every former

former claim. From the moment that she received, she adopted me, and from that very moment, no doubt, it was her benign intention to bestow upon me a provision suitable to the maintenance of *her child*; but under the influence of her tenderest partiality, she never wished me to aspire to the honour of being *her niece*; a felicity which, like the forbidden fruit, was the only reservation from my presuming vanity, by attempting to atchieve which, I must inevitably have forfeited her maternal care. Diamonds, I must acknowledge, are not commonly the appendages of poverty; yet think you not, that the illustrious house of Fitzalwine might feel a more cruel degradation than from an alliance with innocent indigence?

Be your thoughts what they may, your aunt knew of the glittering deposit at the time, and fondly fancying every one must behold her favourite in the mirror of her own affection, she entertained

tained a kind of prophetic dread of that prepossession, which has since unfortunately taken place, and actually bartered the company of her nephew, the hope, the comfort, and the pride of his family, to fulfil the benevolent trust she had undertaken in the guardianship of a wretched foundling.

Is it then for you or me, to counteract her views, whose welfare, whose separate welfare, she has sacrificed so liberally to confirm?

I have been highly culpable in having once, though transiently, cherished the arrogant wish of possessing a happiness, from which I knew myself by destiny proscribed: but the hour of delusion is past, I have escaped the remorse of having tarnished that honour, against which I was weak or wicked enough to conspire, and you the fascinating dangers of a too susceptible heart.

As for my mother's picture, not without some pain I bid you keep it. Perhaps

haps there may be even a degree of kindness in the cruelty of with-holding from me the representation of one, whose loss it would the more instruct me how to mourn; at any rate, however I may suffer by the resignation, be assured I have made a solemn vow never to redeem it with a likeness of myself. By whatsoever motive you may suppose my resolution actuated, it is equally steadfast and immoveable. I have erred, but not beyond the pale of reformation, and I trust to the imperceptible but certain operations of time, effectually to efface the ill consequences of my offence, and for the restoration of that tranquillity, the consciousness of having interrupted which constitutes the most poignant affliction of your ever sincere and grateful friend,

SELIMA WORTHY.

LITTER

LETTER CLXXI.

MRS. MONTGOMERY

TO

SELIMA.

NAPLES.

BEHOLD the date hereof, and admire the vicissitudes of fortune, which have transformed into a most egregious wanderer your lately imprisoned friend. At Rome I encountered yours from Hartlebury, happily encountered I should say, were it not so grievously demonstrative of the unyielding obstinacy of its writer.

The fate of Talbot is commiserated by every heart but hers, who alone is able

able to administer relief to the pain she has inflicted. We flattered ourselves, that by the discovery of the jewels and their accompaniments, you would be driven from your only plea. Nobody applauds your conduct but my father. What sinister views or expectations it may open to his mind, Heaven knows ; but

“ Love will hope where reason would despair.”

For my own part, I cannot indulge myself with the pleasing dream, that you persist in rejecting the hand of Captain Talbot, for the honour of being my mamma ; but I am little inclined to jest on the subject. It appears to me a strange misconception of duty, that can lead you to destroy the peace of a worthy man at the expence of your own, when not a living creature is benefited by the deed.

The stile of your letters prove to me, that your senses are totally withdrawn
from

from every social concern. Curiosity itself seems to have expired even in the breast of woman. Here am I arrived at the very verge of Europe, without having excited a wish in your mind to be acquainted with the adventures of my tour, though you know not how I might have shone in the character of a journalist, had I been induced to exercise my talents in that way : but it would be mortifying to write for no purpose ; nay, it is not above a hundred to one, encouraged by fashion and emulation, but I might have had the generosity to present to the public, a history of my travels, if some partial and inquisitive friend had with petitionary zeal prevailed on me to undertake the task ; for as no author has ever yet written to oblige himself, you know it would be somewhat venturous to avow so singular a motive ; so I give up the design, and the world perhaps has lost by your indolence, what all its treasures will not enable it to retrieve,

though the world is worth pleasing, let me tell you ; for it has great capabilities to return the compliment, of which I experienced a most delightful specimen, in the charming nuptial present transmitted me with your letter, and her own congratulations by your worthy guardian. Have you still retained under the dominion of self-contracted melancholy a sufficient degree of your wonted slyness, to have been a confederate in concerting the agreeable surprize with which the unexpected appearance of an exact resemblance of your features have treated your very grateful friend ? The jewels which surround this lovely miniature, though of small comparative value in my esteem, are, notwithstanding, brilliants of the first water ; and the *tout ensemble* forms a precious acquisition, for which I despair of expressing half the thankfulness I feel. A feeble attempt, however, I have made, which, under

cover

cover with this, will, I trust, in due time arrive at Hartlebury.

We have suffered a great loss in the return of our agreeable companion. Sir Charles, after escorting us over the Alps, took leave of us at Turin, in compliance with the wishes of his father and mother. From that place we proceeded to Rome, where we meant to wait the full gratification of our curiosity; but being informed of an extraordinary festival in honour of a favorite saint, which was on the eve of being celebrated here, our intention was frustrated for the present, and we mustered resolution to leave the vestiges of ancient magnificence, in which that famous city and its environs abound, unexplored, to witness one of the most glaring instances of human folly, in the pompous ceremonials of popish superstition. But I ought not to vilify what I am yet unacquainted with, except by report; and, however such idle pageantry may fail to please, Na-

ples, as I have no occasion to inform you, affords much food for the contemplative mind. The little time elapsed since our arrival has permitted me to take a distant view of Mount Vesuvius; but the ruins of Herculaneum and Pompeii remain yet unviolated by my foot. As for the Bay, I do not even wish to behold it in its utmost splendor, as the most trifling excursion by water is formidable to me; and I would willingly relinquish all the amusements it can offer, rather than encounter their attendant perils.

To own the truth, Selima, I have more than once thought of compiling a little sketch of my travels for your private perusal, for all you seem so indifferent about the matter. But on casting a reflecting eye on the beauties of art and nature which I have already seen, I have the mortification to perceive, that I belong either to the class of idle or of simple travellers, for, although not without

out

out taste to admire whatever was worthy of admiration, I have wanted either genius or attention to arrange them in so distinct a manner in my mind, as to form proper materials of description for my pen; and mountains, rocks, vallies, lakes, and promontories, palaces, monuments, statues, &c. &c. are altogether

“Crushed and bruised”

in the chaos of my imagination, from which, though to itself they do not form an unharmonious group, I fear they would advance so oddly marshalled, that you would be led to imagine, that the earth, in conformity to the caprice of its inhabitants, had undergone a revolution.

You see, my dear girl, I have not lost the art of scribbling a great deal without saying any thing; to which was formerly attached a degree of merit, you will allow, when there was nothing for me to say. Situated as I am at present,

I fear it must give up all claim to panegyric, and your excuse for the stupidity it manifests, will amply satisfy and oblige your ever faithful friend,

JULIA MONTGOMERY.

LETTER

LETTER CLXXIX.

CAPTAIN TALBOT

TO

THE HON. VALTIMOND MONTGOMERY.

WHAT have you done with Stanley? Send him to me, if you love mercy. From the sympathising disposition of his mind, I can alone hope for some alleviation of the anguish of my own. Pardon me Montgomery : my friendship for you will never fail, but with my life. Yet under the influence of this malignant power, those are most dear to me, who know and worship the deity I adore. I have seen Selima—surprized her in a moment of unguarded sincerity, when her lips disclosed the sentiments of her heart—
what

what a moment of extacy!—alas! as transient as it was supreme—of what value is an affection, which cannot overcome the cold insinuations of punctilious prudery, and the ridiculous precepts of old women?—hatred itself would be less insupportable.

May blessings innumerable attend you and your gentle bride, but I cannot write—my faculties are deranged. I am only waiting for horses to carry me to Heathcott, where I am going—to do Heaven knows what—whether to drag on a miserable existence, or to spurn it from me as a bauble, that has lost its value, the fates are to determine for your very faithful, and no less wretched friend,

HENRY TALBOT.

LETTER

LETTER CLXXIII.

 SELIMA

TO

MRS. MONTGOMERY.

FORTUNE is determined to thwart all the better purposes of my soul, and cruelly opposes that resignation to its own decrees, which I am daily and sedulously labouring to accomplish.

The receipt of your letter, about an hour ago, in which you inhumanly persist in reprobating a conduct, which I am well assured your unprejudiced judgment would approve, served to aggravate the pain of the moment—a moment, in which I had but little recovered the anguish of inflicting on the generous

nerous mind of Talbot, a renewal of its wound—O! that his wishes might be diverted into a course, in which his honour, his interest, and his happiness would combine.

Buoyed up on the airy forms of his new-raised hopes, Talbot unexpectedly arrived, and crossing the lawn unperceived, was leaning through the window of the music parlour, whilst I was sitting alone at the piano-forte, childishly indulging myself in practising a foolish song, which I had as imprudently composed, as a soothing though dangerous solace of my tortured heart. But here it follows by way of confessionary penance for the weakness, from which it sprang.

In vain on Reason's aid I call,
Her guardian power to prove,
My captive sense to disenthral,
To Reason temper Love.
But Reason's voice here takes the traitor's part,
And still for Henry—for Henry beats
My trembling heart.

When

When Reason can but charms disclose
 To quench the tender flame,
 Friendship will lend, but ne'er oppose,
 Her force to Cupid's name.

Thus Reason's voice here takes the traitors part,
 And still for Henry—for Henry beats
 My trembling heart.

And as it did beat and tremble too, sighs and tears were the unrestrained accompaniments of the words—the feelings of my poor unseen auditor were equally responsive, though unfortunately deluded into a key of temporary delight. In the last line of the second verse, thus transposing the sentence, he joined in chorus, *and still for thee beats Henry's constant heart.*

I started from the chair at the well-known sound, and wonder I did not faint under the violence of my emotions: but happily my spirits are generally roused by extraordinary emergencies, and, instead of being subdued, gain activity by the necessity which calls for their exertion. Yet I was obliged to resume
 my

my seat ; and, with a faltering voice, I said, " Captain Talbot, I fear you have not received my answer to the last noble instance of your generous intentions towards me, or the honour of this visit, which we may both regret."——

" Yes, yes," returned he, with a momentary transport, seizing my hand, and casting himself at my feet, " I have received an answer to my heart's content. Never shall I forget the tender accents which have restored my peace ; nor shall those ruby lips refute the confession they have involuntarily made."

" No," replied I, " I meant not to employ them in so disingenuous an attempt : it is true, that they have betrayed a secret, which, for your sake, I wished inviolably to keep ; yet, though they have in an unlucky moment discovered that the sensations of my heart are still the same, be assured that my judgment, to which I entirely submit the regulation of my conduct, adheres with
equal

equal firmness to its decision ; and if I commit an error, it is there only that you are to look for its foundation.

That expressive countenance, which had so recently been illuminated with delight, instantly lost its animation ; and deeply sighing, he rose and threw himself on the nearest chair, deprived of utterance by the contending passions which wrung his breast. Mine was not unmoved, but that was a slight consideration. Were the sorrow all my own, it should be unrepiningly endured. The traces of his late illness were now perceptible upon his manly brow, but though they revived a pang of regret for the past, they were not such as to excite any apprehensions for the future.

In this affecting moment we were joined by Mrs. Leslie. Talbot, with that graceful air which is too closely engrafted in his nature for any circumstance to remove, and which lost no dignity by the present dejection of his spirits, noticed

her entrance ; but without speaking he sunk again into the pensive position, from which he had been roused.

My guardian, seeing this unexpected visitor, and observing the gloom upon his countenance, imagined that her company was obtrusive, and would immediately have retired. But I, who on the contrary thought it particularly opportune, entreated her to stay and assist me in convincing this poor infatuated young man of the propriety of my determination.

“ There is no occasion, Miss Worthy,” interrupted he, disdainfully, “ You are sufficiently versed in the art of *convincing* a man of the excess of his wretchedness without calling in an auxiliary to complete the work, whoever may have been your instructor in the humane accomplishment. I therefore present Mrs. Leslie my thanks, for all the kind offices, for which I may be already indebted, and hope they may be considered

as an acquittal of obligations between us."

This unjust inuendo, though the intemperate effusion of an enthusiastic passion, failed not to call forth a temporary resentment even in the compassionate breast of my dear guardian, and an indignant bow was all the answer it obtained. In addressing himself to me, his language was still more poignantly severe.

"To you, madam," said he, "I from this hour bid an eternal adieu. Be assured, I shall never more attempt to thwart the *benevolence* of your intentions; and if you have a disposition to enjoy the misery of a man who adores you, *you* may exult in the fulness of its success—Farewell." The last word trembled on his lips, and covering his face with his handkerchief he rushed out of the room to conceal emotions, which his pride would not suffer him to expose.

I followed him a few steps, scarcely knowing what I did; but the room seemed to turn round before my eyes; my senses were suspended; I leaned against the wainscot; body and mind were equally enfeebled by the struggles I had endured. Mrs. Leslie proving the prevalence of benignity in her mind earnestly called upon me.

"Selima," said she, "have you no commiseration? are the feelings of humanity entirely extinguished in your nature? Let me follow the amiable sufferer, and tell him that your cruelty relents."

I could not speak, but I looked a negative to her request, with which, though it was peremptorily commanded by my reason, my heart bled to comply.

"Would you wish to drive him to distraction then?" demanded she;

"No, no," faintly I articulated, but my breath was almost gone, my blood
ran

ran cold through my veins, and an universal stupor overcame my faculties, in which I was carried up stairs, and put to bed. Notwithstanding the maternal care and judicious means which were exerted for my recovery, it was some time before I was restored to a consciousness of the peculiar distresses of my situation, in which I was compelled either to combat an attachment founded on virtue and too acute a sensibility of superior worth, or be reduced to the forfeiture of my own esteem. How difficult a task is it to persevere in the right path, when such dear and insinuating influence on every side is employed to make me deviate from its boundaries; yet whilst I feel the kind partiality which has misled that influence from the superior judgment by which it would otherwise be directed, my resolution is unshaken. To recede, after having advanced thus far, would be to demonstrate a greater weakness than what a

a continuance in error, without one effort to extricate myself, would have proved. Dear Talbot! beloved, superlatively as thou art amiable; it is in thy sufferings that the weight of mine consists, but the worst is over: not a day will henceforth take its course without effecting some extenuation of a passion, which it will teach thee to contemn. Thou wilt again be happy, and I shall have the merit of preserving thee from a precipice, towards which I blindly was thy guide. The bandage is fallen from my eyes, and I sacrifice thy love, that I may be worthy of thy esteem. Julia, you will think I am distracted: indeed how can you think otherwise, knowing the irritability of my spirits, when you are acquainted with the trials they have undergone.

Captain Talbot, in his anger, has sent me my mother's picture; but alas! comfort drops its form as it approaches me: yet it is a soothing melancholy with which

which I contemplate this dear memorial of an unknown parent.

If Mrs. Leslie and yourself would graciously grant me a respite from your piercing, though well-meant remonstrances, till you could prove, that in accepting the offers of the nephew, I should be properly returning my obligations to the aunt, O! how you would in one instance be augmenting the multitude, in which I proudly feel myself indebted to you both: I should then yield submissively, though not without a silent pang, to the rigid justice of my fate.

On leaving my chamber, my first care was, to destroy the scrap of paper which was instrumental in aggravating a misfortune which I had vainly flattered myself was in part removed; but it was not to be found, and I fearfully suspect a thief, who only pillages to the destruction of his own repose.

I am

I am glad Mrs. Leslie has sent you my picture, as I know it would be an acceptable present to a partial friend. Indeed, I was not a confederate in the design; for as we were distant from any good artist, it was copied from one she wears, and is as perfect a likeness as the original at least, as I am informed; for my first knowledge of the circumstance I received from you.

We are to leave Hartlebury in a few days; and it is the intention of its dear mistress to pass the remainder of the Summer in the house in which our deceased friend resided when she benevolently rescued me from the jaws of ignorance and distress. The air being famed for its salubrity, the scene being particularly cheerful, and, moreover, a wish I once inadvertently expressed to see a spot from whence the earliest annals of my eventful history can be dated, conspired to fix her plan; and, on inquiries, finding it vacant and ready furnished,

furnished, she hopes to take possession of her new abode on this day week.

I must plead guilty to your charge of want of curiosity; and had you added to it that of wanting taste too, the accusation would have been equally uncontrovertible: but, alas! you know full well, that they both proceed from one more grievous, the want of internal ease. A breaking heart will perforce withdraw the languid eye from the contemplation of pleasurable scenes, and occupy it wholly with the gloom which reigns within. Forgive me, Julia; I know I am undeserving of the tender interest my kind friends take in the promotion of my happiness. Vain are their endeavours, and fruitless is the remorse I feel in not returning them with that success which is the only recompence they seek.

Are you divorced, or are you, in the space of two months, become so fashionable a wife, as not to suffer your husband

band to engage any portion of your thoughts? for I think you scarcely ever mentioned him throughout your last epistle. Give my best regards to him nevertheless. If he has lost those of his fair rib, he will expect some consolation from the rest of the world. But it is ridiculous in me to attempt to trifle. Present my compliments to Mr. Westburne, and rest assured of the sincere affection of your

SELIMA WORTHY.

LETTER

LETTER CLXXIV.

CAPTAIN TALBOT

TO

SIR CHARLES SMITH STANLEY, BART.

IF thou hadst a grain of sympathy in thy nature, thou would'st hasten to the relief of a suffering friend, nay, a fellow-sufferer; if it be possible for a man to love without hope, and remain under the government of his reason. As for mine, it is entirely lost; and, if it would teach me to forget the fatal excellencies of Miss Worthy, I am willing to resign all commerce with it from henceforth.

I wrote to Montgomery conjuring him to send you to me with all possible expedition: I suppose you were on your return,

return, before the arrival of my letter. I was in a state of distraction at that time, and am not yet capable of giving any solid proofs of the recovery of my senses; nor wonder at their derangement, Selima is lost to me for ever. I have bidden her an eternal adieu; and that too at a moment, when I had drank such an intoxicating draught of hope, that nothing less than frenzy was the natural consequence of the disappointment, which ensued; yet I did not rave. No, I carried away the outward appearance of manly grief, though I felt within all the infantine weakness, to which by this tyrannic passion the stoutest heroes have been subdued. How should it be otherwise, when I heard my name trembling on her lips accompanied with all the emotions which denote the warmest affection, yet found myself still rejected by her stubborn heart?

“ Tell me, my *friend*, can this be love?”

If

If it is, it is of an extraordinary nature you will allow: yet that is no argument against its existence; for is she not an extraordinary creature, who is the subject of the query? But when we meet, I will shew you the song, which I stole unawares to its sweet composer. I have not the smallest doubt of the composition being her own (though Henry is no uncommon name) for I never met with it elsewhere, and both the notes and the words are of her own writing; besides an inexplicable something, which never fails to discover to a true lover, the work of his mistress' hand. It is evident, at least, that she triumphs not in the pain which she inflicts, and bears a sympathy, I fear a dangerous sympathy, in the wound. The roses have departed from her cheeks; and though her beauty is not impaired, it has entirely changed its character. What once was all animation, spirit, and vivacity, is now a delicate langour, and

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melancholy expression of countenance, which charms no less, and doubly interests the beholder. For my own part it intimates to my mind an apprehension, which adds greatly to a misery, that was not in want of aggravation. Tell me, I say, is it possible for a woman to sacrifice her own peace, as well as that of the man whom she really loves, in conformity to the whim of a deceased friend?—No, no; she is encouraged in her infidelity by the old ——. But I will not rail on mere presumptive provocation. She may—heavens! the thought never occurred to me before—May not a new attachment, with other obstacles than caprice to combat, have superseded one, where ambition, or some more vapid influence, may have formed the transitory tie?—Nay, by my soul, it is the very language of her pen, which I fondly misconstrued into a generous feint, vainly intended to erase her image from my mind. Fool, fool that I was!

to

to confide in the constancy of woman ;
and yet wherefore, in a moment of sup-
posed privacy, where no motive for in-
sincerity could exist, did the lovely
warbler bless my ears with this sweet
confession :

“ And still for Henry beats my trembling heart.”

Pshaw ! pshaw ! have I not just ob-
served, that there are more Henrys in
the world than one ? Come to me, or
I shall be mad. Daily have I sent mes-
sengers to Oatley-farm, in hopes of hear-
ing of your arrival, and this morning I
received a polite note from your father,
to inform me, that he had heard from
you, and that it was retarded by a cha-
ritable visit to your aunt, Lady Stanley,
the disconsolate mother of the young ba-
ronet, to whose honours you succeeded.
Such an engagement, I acknowledge, is
of a nature to silence my solicitations ;
but when it is fulfilled, for mercy's sake
suffer not any less interesting to divert

your steps. You will pity, not ridicule, my weakness ; and what is still more essential, you will spare the cruel authoress of my pain. I cannot permit any body to rail at her but myself ; an injurious exclamation will now and then escape me, but my heart, which in such cases is always at variance with my tongue, never sustains the outrage with impunity.

Almost a fortnight has my perturbed spirits haunted the walls of this once-honoured mansion, whose principal merit with me is having once been the abode of her I love. Not till yesterday did I know the apartment particularly appropriated to her use ; and from henceforward it will be my cage. You know not how refreshing to my wearied spirits were the wakeful hours I passed last night, on the self-same pillow which has formerly been pressed by the velvet cheek of the angelic Selima. The furniture is ennobled by the mistress whom
it

it served, and I actually caught my eyes staring at my own rough face in the glass, whilst my imagination beheld only the beauteous form, which I knew it had had the honour to reflect.

Taking a solitary stroll (for I have shut out the world, and renounce all society but yours) I was accosted by the old gardener, who is grown grey in the service of the family: "Sarvent your honour," said he, touching his hat, resting his wearied back from the labour in which he seemed most diligently employed, and throwing his spade across his shoulder, "you are taking a taste of the fresh air I see; I was afeard your honour was ill, as you seed no company. For sartain said I to my wife, some'at's the matter with our young 'squire, or he'd never come and bury himself alive in yonder great house, without visiting his neighbours, or speaking to a single soul. Why affable as he looks, said I, just as his good papa used to

do, when he comed a courting to Miss Louisa, he passes me every day as if I was no more than one of the cabbages of my own planting. Why Sir, you should have been at the manor to-day for sure ; all the gentry are met together at a shooting-match with bows and arrows. It is a pastime all the great folk about us seem to take much delight in. It would have done you good to have been amongst them."

I thanked the honest fellow and smiled at his solicitude ; but finding him too voluble a familiar for a spirit of my taciturnity, I was moving on, when he exclaimed, " hold, hold, your honour ; if I may be so bold, I should like to speak to you about that wood on the left hand—it has long been an eye-sore to me. You see what a rough state it is in ; I have done nothing at it lately, for thinks I, when young master comes, I am sure he will make some alterations in it.—Why you see, it hides every bit of the village :

village : not a house can be seen, nor a chimney, *except* it be part of the *church steeple*, and that is only here and there a bit, when one can catch a glimpse of it through the trees.

Now if there was an opening made just opposite this place, it would give a command of that pretty new-built brick house, the bowling-green, and the turnpike road and all ; and then that fow craggy end of the rock on the other side might be planted off with all ease ; for many of the trees are young enough to remove, and a few shrubs amongst them would make it quite complete. It would be a vast improvement to the view from the hall windows ; I used oftens to talk to poor madam about it ; but I could never bring her over to my mind. She was a very good lady to be sure ; but she knowed nothing at all about these matters, and when once a woman gets a thing into her head, one might as well
try

try to bend the trunk of an oak, as to make her hear *raison*."

"They are very unperfuadable indeed," answered I with a sigh.

"I oftens wonder," resumed my loquacious friend, fixing his shovel in the ground, and leaning his elbows on the handle with the air of beginning a long story, which I felt myself predetermined to cut short—"I oftens wonder what became of that pretty young lady she brought with her out of Kent, when she was but an infant. By my sake, I think I never seed her feller; so good, as well as so beautiful."

I no longer thought of his prolixity: Had he talked to eternity, I believe I should have been attentive—The sweets of Hybla seemed to be flowing from his lips.

"At least so she seemed," continued he; "and as for the ill stories that were told about her when she went away, I never believed them. I think you was
not

not acquainted with her, Sir. "I do not remember seeing you here whilst she was at the hall. But, indeed, it was whispered, that your aunt feared you might like her too well, being as how she had no fortune, and was not comed of honourable parents."

"I never saw her at Heathcott," returned I; "but I have met with her frequently since she left it; and can assure you, she is as amiable as you think her, and I hope equally happy;" forcibly stifling a sigh, for I was afraid of betraying myself by the emotions which you will naturally suppose such a conversation was well calculated to create.

"Well, really," said the good creature, "I have not heard a piece of news that has given me more pleasure this mony a day"—drawing his finger across his eye.

"I could have hugged the greasy rogue—he pleased me."

"Dear,

“ Dear, dear, how glad our wenches will be! She would have come to my poor bit of a hut in the holidays; and, tucking up her white frock, would have sat on a three-footed stool to teach my grand-children their lessons, as free and good-natured as if they had been her play-marrows; and they never were at all dashed when they were talking to her, though, as I used to say to my dame, she had as much dignity as if she was born to be a queen. And when she growed up, and comed home for good, she never neglected the poor—All the parish thought that her leaving the country was like a forerunner of the loss they had soon afterwards in the death of our good lady. Then she was so complished too! How have I stood listening to her sweet pipe, as she has been chanting away, like any nightingale, in yonder window.”

“ Which window?” demanded I, eagerly.

“ That

“ That there,” answered he; “ the second in the East wing. The room it belongs to was her bed-chamber; and she was such an early riser, that she would oftens be singing when I comed to my work in a morning.”

Highly delighted with this intelligence, I was all impatience to give timely orders for this forcibly-recommended apartment to be made ready for my reception, fully determined not to pass another night in any other. But honest Thomas, not yet wearied with his own eloquence, called again on my attention to his favorite design.—

“ Well, but fir—you have not answered me consarning the plantation— If you will have it done according as I have planned it, the sooner we set about it the better.”

“ O! we will talk about that another time,” taking his shrivelled hand, and giving it a hearty shake.—“ I am sure my good friend, you and I shall never quarrel

quarrel about a trifle"—and springing over the asparagus beds, pea sticks, and gooseberry bushes, and leaping over the sunk fence, I flew to take possession of my new quarters, with as much eagerness, as if I had expected to find the lovely form there to which they owe their present value—alas ! the delight was but of short duration, much like that I experienced on first entering the house ; yet every thing round me retains a superior consequence from having once been serviceable to Miss Worthy ; and though they have already lost the power of creating any transport in my breast, they feed and soothe my melancholy, as the precious relicks of a departed friend.

A beautiful toilet box, painted and varnished with great taste and genius, had attracted me to a different part of the house. I am sure it was the work of Selima : but I now conclude it was designed to ornament the dressing-table of her benefactress—I believe, St. Lievre suspects

suspects that it contains some wonderful talisman, on which my health and happiness depends; I am so averse to having it a moment out of my sight. He once proposed to remove it into the drawing-room, lest it should receive any injury from the powder he usually scattered about, when he dressed my hair; but I believe his apprehensions are now perfectly at rest, as to any damage I may occasion in the beautifying of my person, as he frequently remonstrates with me on letting my hair grow wild.

Every thing passes indifferently with me. Incessantly engaged as my thoughts are by one absent object, they must naturally be abstracted from those which are present—this new idea, with which I am strongly prepossessed, that Selima loves, but that it is not “me of all mankind alone,” aggravates my torture, till it is utterly insupportable. Come, and tell me if you take a part in my suspicion?—but I have means of obtaining

more certain information—my groom has a friend in court; happy rascal! more fortunate than his master—when my fatal visit at Hartlebury was concluded, and I was in a furious hurry to depart, it was some time before I could get away, because he was not to be found; and when I swore at him for retaining me, he blushed, and said he had been taking leave of his cousin the house-maid.

And I feel myself at last compelled to take leave of you, having nothing to say, but the old story over again; unless I exchange it for one almost as old, and quite as sincere, though not so lamentable, which is in brief, that, in spite of rivalry, I am, and will continue whilst I have life, your faithful and affectionate friend,

HENRY TALBOT.

LETTER

LETTER CLXXV.

 SELIMA

TO

 MRS. MONTGOMERY.

THOUGH conscious that I have scarcely yet given my last letter time for the performance of its long journey, I cannot resist the inclination I feel to tell you how greatly I am charmed with our new habitation and its environs, though Mrs. Leslie informs me that the face of the country is greatly changed—the village of Barley-brow not being *deserted*, but a deserter from its former situation, to give place to a magnificent, though yet unfinished, edifice, and the pleasure-grounds appertaining to it, at present

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the property of the Earl of St. Alvin, a nobleman lately returned to England after a long residence abroad. The inhabitants, however, have lost nothing by their removal; their houses, which are now disposed of so as to render the scene most singularly picturesque and beautiful, being better, and let on an easier rent than they were before, besides many other benefits resulting from the generosity of their wealthy landlord. Even our little villa has come within the influence of his improving hand, and, with the consent of the owner, has been rough-casted over to make a more agreeable object for the new-built *chateau*. All the country resounds with the praises of the noble stranger, and the spectre poverty must certainly have vanished at his approach; not one instance of beggary or distress having presented itself since we came; and I have told my benevolent friend, that it would be impossible for her to be happy long in a place

which

which would afford so few opportunities for the exercise of her favourite talent, that of turning sorrow into joy.

“ You pay me a pretty compliment, Selima, I confess,” said she—“ and yet I think I might have expected a better and a juster one from you. Surely to true charity it belongs only to be zealous in the relief of that distress which actually exists ; not in wishing for the existence of an evil for the sake of displaying our abilities in its cure. Yet there is a selfishness, I believe, in the best of principles : for is it not the pain a tender heart endures on beholding human misery, which renders it assiduous in its removal ?”

“ Dear madam,” said I, “ I stand corrected. From whose lips indeed but yours might one hope to hear a perfect definition of unaffected charity ?”

“ Go, you flatterer,” said she, “ and put on your bonnet, that we may not murder

murder this lovely evening in practising fine speeches."

I instantly attended her, ever ready to partake of the charms of air and exercise. Even now, when an universal listlessness possesses me, whilst my mind is wholly engrossed by one miserable reflexion, I should consider it as necessary to my health, and therefore a duty incumbent on me to perform, were not a propensity to sauntering about a constant attendant on affliction. In an evil hour we set out together, arm in arm; for after having taken a long and pleasant walk, on our return home, my dear companion happened to tread on a loose stone, that turned under her foot, in consequence of which she slipped, and sprained her ankle. It was with the utmost difficulty that I led her to the house, though we were scarcely above two hundred paces from it. When her stocking was drawn off, we found the part so much enflamed, that I earnestly entreated
that

that a surgeon might be called in; but my guardian shook her head, and said that either Guiellon or herself knew how to cure a sprained ankle as well as any of the fraternity; and having consulted with her prime minister in this department, the medicine-chest was unlocked, an esteemed nostrum produced, and I make no doubt, very properly applied, though there are yet no visible proofs of its efficacy. The swelling is much increas'd, and the inflammation has given place to a frightful blackness, which I shudder to look upon.

Both the doctresses smile at my impatience, and assure me, that the sinews have received so violent a wrench, that it will be some time before they recover their natural state. Happily Mrs. Leslie's spirits are not affected by the pain she suffers, though she is confined to one chair, with her foot before her, and will not permit a single omission in my daily walks, the favourable consequences
of

of which, she flatters herself, she discerns already. Flattery indeed ! But it must not be discouraged. In truth, Julia, I find in this place much food for contemplation ; and what indulges and soothes my sorrow, most enables me to bear it with tranquillity and fortitude.

I shall direct this supplementary scrawl to Rome, as the best security for its reception by your fair hand, as I think your return thither seems to be a moral certainty, and your continuance at Naples dependent only on the whims of chance.

Do not criticise on the tautology of my pen, for so soon repeating that I am ever yours,

SELIMA WORTHY.

END OF THE FIFTH VOLUME.

